

THE TWINS IN THE SOUTH

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Title: The Twins in the South

Author: Dorothy Whitehill

Release Date: February 11, 2012 [EBook #38834]

Language: English

Character set encoding: UTF-8

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JANET AND PHYLLIS LOOKED AT HER WITH DANGEROUSLY CALM EYES

THE TWINS IN THE SOUTH

By

DOROTHY WHITEHILL

PUBLISHERS

BARSE & HOPKINS

NEW YORK, N. Y., NEWARK, N. J.

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MADE IN U.S.A.

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The Twins in the South

CHAPTER I—Welcome to Hilltop

“I always believe in separating sisters,” Miss Hull made this astonishing announcement with a gentle smile.

Janet and Phyllis looked at each other, consternation written large on their faces.

“But Miss Hull—” Janet began.

It was Phyllis who spoke with grown-up assurance.

"We couldn't think of being separated, Miss Hull," she said, with one of her winning smiles. "You see, we found each other only a little over a year ago, and we've had such a lot of time to make up."

"But if you were separated you'd get to know the girls so much better," Miss Hull's soft Southern drawl protested. "I've planned for each of you to room with an old girl. I'm sure it's the better way."

Miss Hull was an imperious woman, statuesque in figure, a smooth level brow, flashing dark eyes and a mass of wavy gray hair, piled high on her head. When she said a thing she expected instant submission. She was surprised when Phyllis, still with her charming smile, but with a note of firmness in her voice, replied:

"But you see, Miss Hull, we should both be very unhappy. We're twins, you know, and that makes a difference."

Miss Hull could not deny the note of decision in her voice, and like all broad-minded and imperious people, she admired anyone who had those same qualities in common with her.

She did not speak down to Phyllis, but rather as to an equal, when she replied:

"Very well, you will room together. I suppose being twins does make a difference," she added laughingly.

Phyllis thanked her, and with a maid to guide them, they went upstairs to a big room, with long French windows, one of which opened onto a tiny balcony. They sat down in comfortable wicker chairs and stared at each other.

"Oh, Phyl, you are magnificent!" Janet exclaimed. "I never was so petrified in my life. Miss Hull is such a masterful sort of person that she silenced me with a glance."

Phyllis tossed her head.

"The person never lived that could silence me," she said vaingloriously. "But I don't think it was very nice of her to wait until Auntie Mogs left and then try to separate us."

"We should have let Auntie Mogs stay at the hotel for a day or two as she wanted to," Janet remarked thoughtfully.

"No; that would have been a kiddish thing to do; and after all, Jan., Miss Hull was really doing what she thought was right. As soon as I explained to her she was very nice about it. I like her tremendously," she said.

"Well, I don't," Janet announced firmly. "She tried to separate us."

"But she didn't, dearest. It would take more than Miss Hull to do that." Phyllis laughed into Janet's serious eyes.

The Page twins after a summer in Arizona with their brother Tom, had come

to Hilltop school. Their aunt, Miss Carter, had brought them from New York to the Virginia hills, but had returned almost at once, for they had arrived early that morning, and she had taken the afternoon train for home. It was six o'clock now, and from their window they could see the twilight creeping closer to the great old trees that grew in a thick protecting border around the school.

Hilltop was indeed well named. The white colonial building crowned the hill, and a roadway, straight as an arrow, and lined on either side with tall interlacing elms, ran down the gentle slope for a mile and a half until it joined the highway in the valley.

It had been a wonderful mansion in its day. Now a new wing had been added on, and many of the rooms had been divided and cut up into smaller ones, but the outside of the house had lost nothing of its old-world dignity and charm.

Janet and Phyllis stood in the little balcony and watched the shadows lengthen on the green below. They had each other so they were not unhappy, but the suggestion of a lump in their throats made them think a little forlornly of Auntie Mogs and the cheerful rooms of their New York house.

"I wish Sally would come," Janet exclaimed. "I simply can't wait to see her."

"Neither can I," Phyllis agreed. "Just think, we haven't seen her since last Christmas."

"It was a shame Daphne couldn't come down with us, wasn't it?"

"Yes, in a way; but we'll be acquainted by the time she gets here, and that will be nice, too."

"Still, it would have been fun to have her on the train with us."

Sally Ladd and Daphne Hillis were old friends of the twins. They had known them in New York, and at Miss Harding's school they had been known as The Quartette. Sally had come to Hiltop for the second term the year before, and it was because of her glowing accounts of boarding-school life that the other three girls had decided to come this year.

Sally had not come from New York with the twins, as they had planned, because at the last minute she had decided to visit a friend of hers in Ohio. Her train was due at eight o'clock.

A knock at the door brought the twins in from the balcony.

"Come in," Janet called, and a tall, heavily-built girl with red hair and spectacles entered the room.

"Aren't you the Page twins?" she inquired heartily.

"Yes, we are," Phyllis and Janet answered.

"Well, Sally Ladd has talked so much about you that I feel as if I'd known you all my life. I'm Gwendolyn Matthews, otherwise known as Gwen." She held out a large hand covered with golden freckles, and the twins shook it gratefully.

"Come along downstairs and be shown off. The girls are dying to see you,

for of course Sally has told us the thrilling way you discovered each other last year."

Phyllis and Janet followed her down the wide red-carpeted hall to the floor below. They could see the lights coming from a big room a little way beyond, and hear a hubbub of voices.

Janet had a sudden and overwhelming desire to run, but Phyllis hurried forward eagerly. Gwen pushed them both before her, and they found themselves in an immense room, brightly lighted by two crystal chandeliers. The ceiling was painted with white clouds against a blue sky, and fat little cupids danced or plied their art with miniature bows and arrows. It was the old ballroom untouched and still beautiful after these long years.

They had barely time to look about them before Gwen held up an impressive hand and announced in strident tones:

"The Page Twins."

There was an instant hush of voices and the girls looked at them curiously. A dark-haired, blue-eyed girl, dressed in fluffy white, left the group she had been talking to and came towards them with outstretched hands.

"I declare, Gwen, you are just a dreadful tease." Her delightful Southern drawl was lazily good-natured.

"How do you do? We're mighty glad to welcome you to Hilltop," she said cordially.

"That's awfully sweet of you," Phyllis smiled winningly.

"Thanks," Janet mumbled.

"My name is Hillory Lee, and I'm a Senior," she went on; but a rippling laugh interrupted her.

"A Senior, just one day old. Come now, Poppy, don't put on airs. You're not old enough."

"A dear little, new little, Senior, all filled up with dignity," another voice teased.

Poppy—Hillory Lee was always called Poppy—led the laugh that followed, and then suddenly the girls gathered around the twins, introducing themselves and talking with a fine disregard of one another.

The dinner gong silenced them, and out of the confusion a double line formed down the length of the room. Phyllis and Janet were shown their places along with the rest of the new girls.

Poppy, as the president of the senior class, stood on the top of the steps that led to a small stage at the end of the room.

"You all must come to order, and please go down very quietly to the hall," she said a little shyly; but no one attempted to tease her. She represented Hilltop as she stood on the stage, and they one and all gave her instant obedience.

The dining hall was under the ballroom of the first floor. Deer heads decorated the wall, with other trophies of the chase. A huge fireplace ran along the side of one wall. The mantel was filled with big silver loving cups.

Janet and Phyllis were to learn their importance in the life of the school as the year progressed. Just at present they could not take in details. They were too busy trying to sort their first impressions.

There were four long tables with twenty girls and two teachers at each. The twelve seniors, with Miss Hull, sat apart in state on a dais at the end of the room. The tables were all narrow and the high-backed oak chairs gave the room the look of an old monastery.

There was lots of talking at dinner. The twins did not try to remember all of the girls' names, but three of them stood out as special friends of Sally's. One was Gladys Manners, a rough-and-tumble sort of girl with mischievous blue eyes, dark hair and a contagious giggle.

"Do you know Aunt Jane's poll-parrot?" she asked at the beginning of the meal, and the twins loved her at once.

Prudence Standish—called Prue for brevity's sake—sat beside Janet, and she was so attentive and thoughtful during the meal and so careful to explain what the girls meant by their many illusions of places and things that had happened in the past, that the twins' gratitude ripened into a sincere liking before the meal was over.

The third girl sat just across from Phyllis. Her name was Ann Lourie. She hardly spoke through the meal, but her quiet smile and the humor that lay at the back of her hazel eyes gave the twins the impression of a personality worth cultivating.

The teachers at the table were Miss Remsted and Miss Jenks. They were both young and full of fun, and the twins contrasted them with the teachers at Miss Harding's, to the latter's disadvantage.

When dinner was over Miss Hull stood up.

"You have nothing to do tonight, girls, but get acquainted; and I want you to do that thoroughly. Remember, every new girl must be made to feel at home at Hilltop."

The bell tinkled, the lines formed, and the girls marched back to the ballroom.

CHAPTER II—School Chatter

It was not long after they had returned to the ballroom until the twins found themselves in the center of a group of laughing girls.

“It would be a regular game,” Gladys Manners announced.

“What would?” Phyllis demanded.

“Guessing which was which,” Gladys told her.

“Oh, let’s try it,” half-a-dozen voices exclaimed.

They put the twins side by side, and then the girls took turns guessing. Between turns the twins would change places, or remain where they were.

“Oh, this is too much!” Prue exclaimed, after she had stared at them for a full minute. “I’m dizzy with looking from one to the other of you, but I’m blessed if I know which one I sat next to at dinner.”

“This is going to be too complicated. I vote that we do something about it.” Ann Lourie spoke with a Southern intonation, but it was different from Miss Hull’s speech and Poppy’s lazy drawl. She came from New Orleans, which accounted for the difference.

“What are you all doing?” Poppy, with her arm around Gwen’s broad shoulders, joined them.

“We’re playing a new game,” Gladys announced. “It’s called ‘Guessing the Twins.’”

“You’re it, Poppy,” Prue laughed. “See if you can do it.”

Poppy tried. The twins looked up at her provokingly. Their soft brown hair waved back from their forehead with almost identical curls. Their heads, exactly the same oval shape, were pressed close together. Their red lips each smiled a twisted smile, and their golden-brown eyes, so like the color of autumn leaves, danced mischievously.

“I declare to goodness there isn’t anybody on earth that can tell you two apart,” Poppy laughed.

“Oh, but there are!” Phyllis told them. “Sally never gets us mixed up.”

"Oh, that's easy to understand," Gwen remarked. "Sally just asks Aunt Jane's poll-parrot which is which, and that bird, you know, can tell her anything."

"Just the same, it's going to be complicating," Ann repeated, "and I suggest that we make one of them wear something to distinguish her from the other. It need only be something tiny, just big enough for our select group," her eyes travelled from Prue to Gladys and to Poppy and Gwen.

"That's a mighty good idea of yours, Ann, and as representatives of the senior class"—Gwen was captain of sports—"we endorse it."

"The question is, what shall it be?" Prue inquired.

"I know." Gladys unpinned a tiny little gold pin that she was wearing. It was the shape of the crescent moon, and was no bigger than a good sized pea.

"It's an old class pin I had years ago when I went to day school. I don't know what possessed me to put it on yesterday when I left home—"

"I do," Prue interrupted. "You had a snapper off, and you thought that would show less than an ordinary pin."

"Untidy little wretch you are," Ann agreed.

The rest looked at Gladys' cuff and, sure enough, there was a snapper off. Gladys, under their laughing scrutiny, was no whit embarrassed.

"Course I'm untidy," she agreed; "that's because I'm an artist, and it's being done this year. You couldn't expect me to be as neat as Prue, the immaculate."

Prue laughed good-naturedly. "Meaning I am not an artist," she remarked. "Well, nobody will dispute that with you, least of all Miss Remsted."

The rest of the old girls laughed as at some well known joke and the twins smiled in sympathy.

"Prue tried to have a crush on Miss Remsted last year," Poppy explained. "We don't encourage them—crushes, I mean—at Hilltop, but Prue is stubborn—comes from New England, you know, where the word was coined—and she would have a crush in spite of the fact that she had been here two years and knew that we would have to take drastic steps to cure her."

"You did and I'm cured; can't we spare them the harrowing details?" Prue protested.

"No; it may be a lesson they'll need, and besides, Poppy loves to point a moral," Gwen remarked. "Go on, Poppy; let's hear the awful end."

"It's coming; just you listen." Poppy directed her story to the twins. "Prue suddenly decided, about the middle of the term, that she was a budding young artist and that all she needed was a little special instruction, so she went to Miss Hull and got permission to take special art. Then she went to Miss Remsted—." Poppy paused to chuckle in anticipation.

"Miss Remsted told her to bring her her best sketch," she continued. "Now, Prue had never made a sketch in her life, but she reckoned it would be easy

enough."

"Prue's a futurist," Gwen interrupted.

"So she about made up her mind to draw an animal. What made you choose something that was living, Prue? I never did understand."

"Then you never will, because I'm not going to tell you," Prue replied airily.

"Oh, but I am," Ann smiled reminiscently. "The day before she did the sketch she came to me and asked me if a great many artists hadn't made their start by drawing pictures of animals. I thought for a minute and then—"

"To show off the knowledge that you haven't got"—Gladys took up the story—"you casually mentioned Rosa Bonheur, and Prue went straight to her desk and—" She turned to Poppy.

"Drew—I mean sketched—the gardener's watch dog," Poppy went on. "He was a nice dog, but not very sketchable. You all know how dogs will jump 'round, so you can't blame Prue for what happened. She finished the sketch and took it to Miss Remsted."

"I did not, I *left* it for her in the studio," Prue corrected.

"Left it; excuse me, I stand corrected," Poppy continued. "History does not repeat just what Miss Remsted said or did, but when Prue went to her desk next morning she found her dog with this little note pinned to his tail—not literally, you understand, but figuratively: 'Prue, dear; it's a very nice little rabbit, but it's a pity he has the mumps.'"

The laugh that followed was led by Prue. The twins exchanged glances. They were both thinking how very differently some of the girls at Miss Harding's would have taken such teasing.

Phyllis always liked and was liked by girls, so she gave the matter less consideration than Janet. Janet's heart glowed; here were the kinds of girls that she had dreamed about. Their teasing stopped before it became unkind. Their laughter held no hint of derision; and, above all, she was conscious of the feeling of fellowship and understanding that existed between them. She found herself wishing that she could be the brunt of their teasing, for somehow, she felt that in that way only could she be admitted to the happy sisterhood.

"There's a strong bond between sister classes at Hilltop," Gladys was explaining. "That's the reason that Gwen and Poppy prefer to talk to us, who are only Sophomores, instead of joining that group of important-looking Juniors over there." She pointed to half-a-dozen girls a little older than the twins who were laughing and joking at the other side of the room.

"They'll adopt the Freshmen and make them behave," Prue exclaimed.

"While it is the Senior's painful duty to see that our class keeps out of mischief," Gladys laughed.

The twins smiled. They liked the way these girls finished each other's sen-

tences and interrupted each other without giving and taking offence.

Ann looked up at the clock—a grandfather one—which stood in the corner of the big room and chimed out the hours drowsily.

“Most time for Sally to come,” she announced. “Let’s go and watch for her.”

CHAPTER III—Sally Arrives

“May we go to the senior’s retreat, Poppy?” Gladys asked. “Your balcony is such a dandy place to watch the road from.”

Once more the twins felt a little tremble of pleasure. Although the girls were the best of friends in spite of the difference in their ages, the Sophomores as a class never failed in their respect to the Seniors.

“Yes, come along; we’ll go with you,” Poppy replied.

“I’d like to get the first look at Sally myself,” Gwen added. “I hope she hasn’t forgotten to bring Aunt Jane’s Poll-parrot.”

They left the ballroom and walked down the broad hall all arm-in-arm.

“Seniors all busy tonight, the lights are not lit,” Prue remarked as they entered a dark room. Gwen switched on the lights and the twins found themselves in what seemed to be a delightful chintz lined nook.

It was a small room directly over the front door. The two-story piazza, with its enormous pillars, enclosed the balcony that led from it through long French windows.

“This is the Seniors’ Sanctum Sanctorum,” Prue explained. “When the cares of school government grow too much for them they come in here to rest.”

“It is also the chamber of horrors on occasion,” Gladys added. “Just wait until you’ve done something bad, and Poppy calls you in to give you a racking over the coals.”

“Why, Gladys; what do you mean by talking like that?” Poppy protested mildly. “I just never could be severe, and I don’t expect to have to be either; especially,” she added seriously, “to any girl in my sister class.”

Prue and Gladys and Ann nodded approval.

“We’ll be good,” Ann said seriously. “We want to give you all the help possible.”

Once more the twins felt a little glow of thankfulness around their hearts. The sound of carriage wheels took them all to the balcony.

“Sally!” Gladys exclaimed; and with one accord they rushed down the stairs and out to the front porch.

Long before the carriage reached the steps, Sally was out of it. She rumbled to the ground and ran towards them, her black bag knocking against her knees.

“Where are my twins?” she demanded breathlessly.

Janet and Phyllis almost smothered her in the warmth of their embrace.

“Oh, Sally, you old darling!” Phyllis exclaimed. “You look so wonderfully natural that I could eat you up for sheer joy.”

“We thought you’d never get here, and we missed you on the train like everything,” Janet said.

“Hello, Sally; it’s great to have you back,” Gladys shook hands heartily.

“How’s Aunt Jane’s Poll-parrot?” Gwen inquired. “My, how I missed that bird this summer!”

“Well, and wiser than ever,” Sally laughed as she held out her hand to Poppy.

“It’s mighty nice to have you back, Sally,” Poppy smiled affectionately.

“We room together until your friend Daphne comes,” Prue told her.

“Good work. Hello, Ann; what are you lurking in the shadows for?” Sally demanded.

“Oh, I never rush, even to say how do you do to my best friend. I much prefer to be the last on the list. Did you have a good summer?”

“Oh, wonderful!” Sally enthused. “Alice’s family were awfully nice to me, and I had a glorious time.”

“It’s too bad Alice isn’t coming back,” Gladys exclaimed. “I’m going to miss her frightfully.”

“I know, but she really isn’t well enough. Why girls, she’s lost pounds,” Sally replied. Alice Bard was a girl Sally had been visiting. She had been to Hilltop for three years, but was unable to return on account of ill-health.

“Well, come along; let’s go in,” Prue suggested. “After all, we’re not the only ones that want to see Sally.”

They followed into the house, and Sally, after she had said “how do you do” to Miss Hull, rejoined them and they went on up to the ballroom. A shout went up from the girls as they saw her coming, and she shook hands until the silence bell sounded.

“That’s the trouble,” Sally protested. “We no sooner get talking when that old bell rings. There are loads of girls I haven’t even had a chance to speak to yet.”

The room emptied in a minute and the twins, with Sally between them, went upstairs.

“I can’t come in and talk to you, because there’s no visiting after hours, but

I'll see you bright and early in the morning," Sally promised. "You're not homesick, are you?"

"Homesick! I should say not," Phyllis protested. "I'm so excited I'm ready to die, and now that you're here it's simply perfect."

"I never knew there were so many nice girls in the world," Janet exclaimed. "It's going to be wonderful, and won't it be fun having Daphne come?"

"Indeed it will; the old quartette together again," Sally agreed. "But I've got to fly now or I'll be caught, and that will never do on the first night back."

They parted, Janet and Phyllis, in their own room with the door closed, stood in the middle of the floor trying to decide why they were so happy.

"It's wonderful, isn't it?" Phyllis began.

"It's just like a wonderful dream," Janet agreed.

"It's nice to have Sally back, isn't it?"

"You bet."

"And I love Ann."

"So do I, the best of all."

They undressed slowly.

"You honestly like it, Jan?" Phyllis inquired anxiously, after the lights were out, and they were both in their single white beds.

Janet's hand found Phyllis's.

"I do honestly," she replied seriously. "There's something about their spirit, the nice way they tease," she added.

"And that sort of understood respect they give the Seniors," Phyllis replied. "It's all so nice and—and—oh, I can't think of the word I want."

"I can; it's *happy*," Janet told her.

They were quiet for a few minutes, and then Janet suddenly sat up in bed.

"But how awful it would have been if Miss Hull had separated us," she said in the darkness.

"She couldn't have done that. No one ever can," Phyllis replied very positively, but very sleepily.

"Never!"

CHAPTER IV—The Rivalry of the Wings

“All aboard for the grand tour of inspection,” Gladys announced.

School for the day was over. All through a confusing morning the twins had been shown from one classroom to another where they had met their teachers. There had been no attempt at lessons, but the girls had been encouraged to talk and give their opinions on the different studies. As a result of this, some shifting had been necessary. In English, one of the new girls named Ethel Rivers had been dropped to the class below. Because from her hasty remarks it was easy to see that she knew very little of literature. She protested, but Miss Slocum stood firm. The twins acquitted themselves well. They sat together and none of the teachers could tell them apart, for they did not know about the tiny crescent pin that Phyllis was faithfully wearing. But unlike Miss Baxter at Miss Harding’s school, the faculty at Hilltop rather enjoyed their own confusion.

Now they were free for the day, and Sally with the able assistance of Prue and Gladys was waiting to show the twins over the school and the grounds.

“You’ve seen the classroom,” Sally began, “and you know about the assembly hall.”

“Oh, Sally, if you’re not going to do better than that I’m going to play guide,” Gladys protested. “The idea of calling a ballroom the assembly hall! It loses all its romance.”

“And besides, Miss Hull doesn’t like it,” Prue added.

“Why?” Phyllis inquired.

Sally waved her hand at Gladys as if she were introducing a speaker.

“You tell it, Glad, and then we’ll be sure to be amused.”

“I accept the nomination, and I will do my best for the people under my care,” Gladys said grandly.

“Well, do start with the explanation of the ball room,” Janet begged. “I’m so curious.”

"That means the history of Hilltop, but I'll do my best," Gladys replied, and began:

"Fifty years ago, Colonel Hull lived in this house. He had lots of money and he lived like a king. He was famous throughout the countryside for his wonderful hunting, but, if you just go on spending money and never do anything to make it, it doesn't last forever, so when Colonel Hull died and Miss Hull's father had the house, he found he didn't have any money to run it with. So for a long time Miss Hull and her father and mother lived in the old wing and were terribly poor.

"Then her parents died and the house was Miss Hull's, but still there wasn't any money. All her friends wanted her to sell it, but she wouldn't do it. There had been six generations of Hulls on this place, and she wasn't going to let her ancestors up in heaven see her beaten by a little thing like no money."

"Oh, Glad!" Sally and Prue protested.

"Well, she wasn't," Gladys persisted. "Maybe that's not a very elegant way of putting it, but it's exactly as it was. She wouldn't admit she was beaten, and, of course, she wasn't.

"She got together with some teachers that she knew and she started Hilltop. She started with ten pupils, and now I wish you'd look at us. We're the most wonderful school in the country."

Gladys finished as though she were closing a speech to the Senate.

"But what about the ballroom?" Janet insisted.

"I'm coming to that, if you have a little patience," Gladys told her.

"Miss Hull remembered her grandfather, and she remembered how he liked to have the rooms called by their special name, so she goes on calling them the same and so you see, instead of having lectures in an assembly hall, like everybody else, we have them in a real ballroom, that's the most beautiful room in the state.

"That's why we call it the ballroom still, and why we call the dining room the hall, why Miss Hull's room is the boudoir instead of an office, and why we have history in the library instead of a classroom. You see, it gives us an advantage over other schools, makes Hilltop original instead of an ordinary boarding school."

Gladys paused, and looked at her listeners for appreciation.

The twins sighed. "It's just wonderful!" Janet said.

"Why it makes you think you're living in the time of white wigs and patches," Phyllis whispered, looking about her as though she expected to see Colonel Hull walk through one of the heavy oak doors, ready for a day with the hounds.

Janet's eyes held the look of dreamy speculation that had so often filled them when she was reading old-world stories in her Enchanted Kingdom.

Gladys had dropped her mocking tone as the story unfolded. The realest love in her life was Hilltop, and she loved to talk about it. She saw the look in the

twins' eyes that she had hoped to see, and she smiled contentedly.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, step this way if you please," she went on with a return to her laughing manner. "We will now learn something of the present history of the school. We are now in the old building and, I might add, the only building to live in, but observe this green baize door. It leads to what is commonly called the new wing."

She pushed it open with a contemptuous push, and they found themselves in a spick-and-span corridor of white woodwork and gleaming mahogany doors. In comparison to the old and stately paneled walls of the old building it seemed new indeed.

Several girls that the twins recognized came out of one of the rooms and stopped in mock surprise.

"Why, Gladys! Why, Prue! Why, Sally!" Louise Brown, a tall and lanky girl, and one of their own classmates, exclaimed. "Is it possible that you've come for a breath of fresh air to our light and sunny abode, after the mouldy shadows of yours?" she asked, smiling sweetly.

Gladys sighed, but it was Sally who answered.

"No," she said in a bored tone, "we are simply showing Janet and Phyllis what to avoid in the future."

The other girls laughed good-naturedly.

"That's one on you, Sally," Louise admitted, and one of the other girls exclaimed:

"Long live the rivalry between the old and the new at Hilltop!"

"Well, anyway, now that you're here, come on into my room, I've got a whale of a box of candy," little Kitty Joyce invited.

When they were all seated in her dainty room, Phyllis said, shyly:

"I wish somebody would explain to me about this rivalry; I don't understand."

"I'll explain!" Louise jumped up and stood in the middle of the floor, her hands behind her back.

"We are two distinct and separate wings," she began, "and we represent the old and the new. For some reason that nobody will ever understand, a spirit of rivalry started between the two years ago, when we were very new. Now it is an established fact. We fight in games, in art and in lessons for the glory of our wings, and even at the risk of being rude," she added with a little twinkle in her eye, "I'm going to state last year our house won everything."

"Everything but archery, history, composition and dramatics," Prue reminded her gravely.

"Oh, pouf!" Kitty laughed. "Those don't count. We won the tennis cup, the running cup, the art prize, for sculpture and painting."

“That was last year,” said Sally severely.

They munched the candy for a while in silence, and then Kitty said slowly:

“Funny thing the way the wings feel about each other. Why, look at you, Sally. You were awfully good friends with Alice Bard, and she was a new wing girl....”

“Well, for that matter, take us here today,” Louise put in. “We’re really the best of friends, and yet—”

“And yet there’s a difference. It’s rather like two brothers who go to different colleges. They love each other, but they love their colleges too.”

“All very well,” said Gladys, “but the truth of the matter is that both wings enjoy the spirit of competition. It gives us something to think about and work for.”

“But you’re so good-natured about it,” Janet said wonderingly.

“Of course we are,” Sally replied. “Whoever heard of two basketball teams really disliking each other, and yet they’ll fight tooth and nail for a cup.”

“A cup that they really don’t want, either, except for what it stands for,” Gladys added with a little laugh.

Kitty threw up her two little hands in mock despair.

“Mercy on us. We are getting in deep. I vote we have some more chocolates.”

The girls returned to the candy box with renewed interest and for the time being the subject of the wings was dropped, but not before the twins had grasped the exact nature of the rivalry.

CHAPTER V—A Fresh Freshman

“Something’s got to be done about that little Ethel Rivers.”

Sally sat down in the big tufted chair in the twins’ room, and made the announcement with a positiveness that left no room for doubt.

“What’s she been doing now?” Phyllis laughed.

“Why, Prue and I met her in the hall and she walked past us with her nose in the air. Prue stopped her and asked her where she was going, and what do you

think she said?"

"Can't imagine," Janet shook her head. "Tell us."

"She said she was hurrying back to the new wing for a breath of clean air."

"Impudent infant," Ann drawled lazily. She was lying on the foot of Janet's bed, almost asleep. "It wouldn't have been nearly so bad if she said fresh, but clean is really outrageous."

"But of course she didn't mean it," Phyllis said.

"That's the funny part of it," Prue came in from the balcony and stood in the doorway, blotting out the light. "She really did mean it. She's taken the rivalry of the wings as a deadly serious thing."

"Being entirely without a sense of humor, she would," Sally said crossly. "Remember Mary Marble last year? I was only a new girl, but I saw something was going to happen."

"It did. Our little Mary returned not this year."

"What was the matter with Mary?" Phyllis inquired.

"Didn't fit," Sally replied shortly, and dismissed the subject.

There was a knock on the door and Gladys, too impatient to wait for Janet's "Come in," opened it. By the expression on her face, all the girls knew that something was the matter; even Ann sat up and looked surprised.

"What's wrong, Gladys?" she demanded.

Gladys stood with her back to the door, her hand still on the knob.

"The trouble," she said impressively, "is Ethel Rivers."

Sally groaned. "What next?" she inquired.

"She put a sign up on the green door, requesting the occupants of our wing to be sure and keep it closed, so as not to let in any of the stale air."

"Oh, that's too much," Prue said indignantly.

"Just like her," Ann replied with a shrug. "What did you do about it, Glad?"

"Didn't have to do anything. Poppy and Gwen came along just then and read it. Poppy said, 'I declare, that's no nice way to act,' and Gwen settled the whole matter with 'Very bad manners for one so young.'"

The girls laughed a relieved sort of a laugh. The Seniors had the affair in hand, and Hilltop looked from year to year to that little group of girls to straighten out all their difficulties.

Another knock sounded on the door. Gladys opened it, and one of the younger children handed her a note. She opened it and read:

"Dear Glad:

Find Ann and Prue and Sally, and come down to the Seniors' Retreat. We think you are better able to deal with the affair of Ethel Rivers than we are.

If we give her impertinence special notice, it will be putting too much importance to the whole silly thing.

Yours,
— Poppy."

The girls jumped up quickly as Gladys finished reading the note aloud.

"Better go right away," Prue said. "They're waiting."

The rest followed her out of the room.

"Meet you down on the front steps later," Sally called back over her shoulder, and the twins were alone.

Two weeks had passed since the opening of school, but although Janet and Phyllis felt perfectly at home in their new surroundings, the life at Hilltop had never for a second become monotonous. Every day they had found some fresh interest, and they were beginning to understand that apart from lessons every girl had a big responsibility towards the school.

"What a perfectly silly way for that girl to act!" Janet exclaimed. "I'd like to box her ears."

"So would I," Phyllis agreed. "Come along; let's go down and wait for Sally."

They went downstairs arm in arm and across the broad piazza. Phyllis sat down with her back against one of the big pillars, and Janet stood on the top step.

The close-cropped green lawn fell away from the house in a gracious slope to meet a fringe of trees that deepened into a woods at all sides. The tennis courts were visible far away to the right. They were filled with girls, and in the quiet of the late afternoon their voices floated laughing on the breeze. To the left the archery target blazed in its fresh coat of bright colors.

Archery was the chief sport of Hilltop. Each year teams were chosen from both wings, and on Archery Day the big silver loving cup was engraved with the name of the girl who made the highest score; then it was replaced in the center of the mantel-piece in the hall to await the next year.

Archery Day came at the end of the term, and, although the days before and after it were filled with tennis matches, basketball, and running, it stood out in importance above them all.

The tryout for possible candidates was to take place the following week. The girls in the four upper classes shot five arrows, and the committee comprised with the Senior class and the faculty judged. Those selected worked hard and practiced, and just before the Christmas holidays the teams were chosen.

"Did you ever shoot a bow and arrow, Jan?" Phyllis inquired.

"Loads of them," Janet replied. "Harry Waters used to make them for me. Little short ones made from the branches of trees, and arrows with a pin in the

end of them. Harry was very good at it, but I was terribly clumsy."

"I don't believe it," Phyllis protested; "you have a straight eye anyway. Look at the way you shot Sulky Prescott's gun last summer."

Janet gave a little shiver and looked long and earnestly at the target.

"Don't talk about it," she said. "I'll tell you a secret Phyl. I'll die of mortification if I don't make some sort of a score next week."

"That's no secret," Phyllis laughed affectionately. "If you could have seen your eyes when Gwen was talking about the contest; they were as big as saucers."

Janet flushed a little. "It's a good thing the rest of the girls don't know me as well as you do," she said.

"That's because I'm your twin. Oh, Jan, if you knew how I love to say that," Phyllis said seriously.

"I know," Janet nodded. "I'm still afraid sometimes that I'll wake up and find it's all been a dream."

"Hush," Phyllis cautioned suddenly. "Here comes Ethel."

CHAPTER VI—A Squelching

Upstairs in the Seniors' Retreat the girls were talking seriously.

"Of course, she deserves to be called down in front of the whole school," Helen Jenkins, a very severe type of girl with big horn-rimmed spectacles, was saying. She was the editor of the school paper, and the most studious girl in the school.

"But, as Poppy says, it's never wise to attach too much importance to the mistakes of a new girl," Marion West, vice-president of the class, replied.

Poppy looked at the three Sophomores before her.

"Have you all any suggestions?" she inquired.

Gladys and Sally looked at Ann.

"Perhaps a gentle little boycott might help," she suggested quietly.

"It's just as hard on our wing, if not worse, than it is on yours," Stella Richardson, one of the Seniors who lived in the new wing, spoke up. "There isn't one of us who wouldn't gladly drown the little wretch, and the trouble is,

she's gotten some of the new girls and talked to them until they feel it's a positive virtue to be rude every time they see one of you."

"Oh, it's all too nonsensical," Gwen exploded. "Good old wings, who dares to take our happy fight and make an ugly thing out of it?"

"My thumbs are down for anyone who dares," Ruth Hall announced. She roomed in the new wing with Stella Richardson.

Gwendolyn Matthews might have been said to have snorted with rage. She was a splendid healthy specimen of girlhood; a mind capable of small and mean thoughts was beneath her contempt. She walked out on the balcony, her back to the rest of the room.

A minute later she beckoned cautiously to the girls to follow her. They crowded out on the balcony on tip-toe and peered down as Gwen directed.

Just below them, sitting on the steps, were Janet and Phyllis. Ethel stood beside them. She was talking in a loud and excited way and the girls listened.

"I should think you'd want to get out of the damp old hole," she was saying. "There's an extra room in our corridor."

Janet and Phyllis looked at her with dangerously calm eyes.

"We've by far the finest bunch of girls in our wing," she continued. "We're going to take everything away from you this year."

"Indeed!" Janet said quietly.

"May I inquire how long you've been at Hilltop?" Phyllis asked politely.

A smile ran around the group of faces watching from the balcony above.

"Oh, I'm a new girl," Ethel replied rather flatly.

"You'd never guess it," Janet said with so much scorn that Gwen almost laughed, and Sally did, but the three on the piazza below were too intent to look up.

"I think the new girls ought to stick together," Ethel announced. "Of course, if you still persist in living in the old wing, why the fight's on, but I rather hoped you'd come over to us."

Phyllis stood up. She was taller than the other girl, and she looked straight down into her pale blue eyes.

"Pardon me," she said, "but there is no fight on at all. As a new girl, neither I nor my twin would presume to act as you advise." She sat down again, with her back towards Ethel.

Janet did not bother to stand when she said what she had to say.

"We saw the sign you put up on the green door, and as new girls we are thoroughly disgusted with you. If we banded together, it would be to show you your proper place." Janet did not raise her voice as she spoke, and when she had finished she looked out over the green lawns as though the sight gave her pleasure after Ethel's sour face.

“It might be well for you to remember,” Phyllis spoke as though her thoughts came from a long distance, “that though we are two separate wings, we are both a part of Hilltop, and though we each give the best that is in us, it is that Hilltop may soar the higher—not as you seem to think it is, for any individual and mean advantage.”

The girls on the balcony looked at one another, speechless with admiration and delight.

“Oh, well said!” Alice whispered.

Gwen and Stella hugged each other and Gladys danced a little jig.

“I declare, I love those children!” Poppy exclaimed.

“They’re *my* twins, I’d have you remember,” Sally exulted.

They looked back again to the piazza. Ethel had gone and the twins were strolling arm-in-arm over the green lawn.

CHAPTER VII—Poetry and Prose

Janet ran down the hall, waving a letter over her head.

“Sally, Phyllis, where are you?” she called.

The door of Sally’s room opened, and Prue came out carrying a drawer piled high with clothes.

“Hello there!” she called. “Come and help me move.”

“Oh, then you know Daphne is coming? I just had a letter from her and I’m trying to find Sally and Phyllis,” Janet replied, taking one end of the heavy drawer.

“You’ll find them all in there.” Prue nodded her head towards the door she had just left. “They are stuffing my peanut butter, eating my crackers and making fun of my poetry.”

“Why, Prue, I didn’t know you wrote,” Janet exclaimed.

“I don’t,” Prue told her; “that is, not for publication, but every once in a while I put things down on paper and somehow or other they rhyme.”

“Why didn’t you show me any of them?”

"They weren't good enough. I'd never have let those wild Indians see them. Just as I was packing, my notebook fell out of my desk, and a lot of papers I had in it, scattered to the floor. And, of course, Sally pounced on them."

"Poor Prue," Janet sympathized.

They were walking slowly down the hall carrying the drawer between them.

"Oh, that's not the worst of it; as I told you, they are eating my food and laughing at my most beautiful thoughts, and to think I'm going to room with Glad and Ann. I suppose I'll have no peace."

"Better start writing poetry about them and their pet failings," Janet suggested. "If you wrote an ode to the freckles on Glad's nose, she'd probably keep very still in the future."

"Oh, good idea! I'll do that very thing!" Prue exclaimed.

They reached the room at the end of the hall and Prue paused to open the door.

"The Countess's Room," she announced.

"Oh, what a nice name. I didn't know you called it that."

"We don't, but Miss Hull does," Prue corrected. "You see the beautiful Countess de Something Something, Camier, I think it was, came to visit Colonel Hull, and she had this room; so it's been called her room ever since."

"Oh, I think that's awfully nice; Phyllis will be crazy about it. Wonder who slept in our room?"

Janet looked around the big room with interest. It was plenty large enough to accommodate three beds. Two of them were cots, the third was an enormous four-poster. It looked worthy indeed to be the couch of a Countess. She was so busy exclaiming over the tester, with its glazed chintz ruffle, that she did not see the sudden gleam in Prue's eye. She even forgot to make any more inquiries about the possible celebrity that had slept in her own room.

They dumped the contents of the drawer onto the bed and then carried it empty back to Sally's room.

As they paused at the door, a shout of laughter greeted them, and they heard Glad exclaim:

"Oh, do listen to this," she cried: "The smoky darkness of a rich Egyptian night."

Prue walked into the room, followed by Janet.

"Prue, dear, didn't you mean a Pittsburgh night?" Ann asked provokingly as she finished spreading a cracker with as much peanut butter as it could hold.

Prue did not deign a reply. Instead she swooped down upon the unsuspecting Ann and took her carefully spread cracker away from her.

"Peanut butter is bad for freckles, darling," she said without a trace of ill-humor in her voice. "Prue will eat it."

There was a scuffle and the cracker was eventually ground under somebody's heel. When peace was restored, Janet flourished her letter once more above her head.

"From Daphne?" Phyl cried, recognizing the writing.

"Yes; she's coming today, but how did you find it out?"

"Miss Hull called me down after mail, and told me," Sally explained. "She gets in about five-thirty, just in time for dinner."

"Oh, I wish we could go to the station," Janet exclaimed.

"Afraid we can't do that," Sally replied, "but we can go down to the gate."

"Oh, good! Then when we see her carriage we can hop aboard," Phyllis said.

"To think she'd really be here tonight!" Janet cried. "Funny, beautiful Taffy."

"Do tell us about her," Gladys demanded.

"Yes, do," Ann and Prue echoed.

The three girls looked at each other.

"You tell them, Sally," Janet said, but Sally shook her head.

"No, Jan, Taffy's more yours than ours," she replied, and Phyllis nodded.

"Go ahead," she encouraged. "If we were talking about Sally I'd be spokesman."

"Preserve my character," laughed Sally.

"Oh, don't worry; they'd never learn the truth from me," Phyllis said airily.

"We know all there is to know about Sally," Prue exclaimed.

"Yes, Jan, tell us about this Daphne. She has a lovely name," Ann added.

"Well, it exactly suits her," Janet began, "only we call her Taffy because she has a mop of hair that looks exactly like taffy candy, the rich yellow kind, and her eyes are green, just the color of the sea, when you look straight down into it on a misty day, and her cheeks are like rose petals, not bright pink, but a soft, delicate tint, and her cheeks are ivory white, like cream. She has long slender hands and the most wonderful voice you ever heard; it's soft and furry; she always drawls; in fact, Taffy always looks and talks as if she were half asleep. Her eyelashes are so long and heavy that they almost cover her eyes. When she opens them wide she looks as if she were surprised at what she saw. She's got the keenest sense of humor you ever heard of, and when she says a thing it sounds twice as funny as if anyone else had said it, because of her queer little laugh."

Janet stopped and looked suddenly very self-conscious while the girls looked at her with a new expression in their eyes.

"Why, Jan," Prue exclaimed. "You're a poet."

"I feel as if I'd been listening to a fairy story," Gladys said.

"With the lovely Daphne as the enchanted princess," Ann added dreamily.

"I never realized before how really lovely Daphne was," Sally laughed. "Honestly, Jan, I felt as if she was here in the room as you talked."

Phyllis said nothing. She was curled up on one end of the bed, her head against Sally's pillows, her arms stretched above her. Her face wore an expression of pride and ownership, but not surprise. Janet was her twin, and everything Janet did was perfect in her eyes. When other girls admired her, too, Phyllis just sat back and smiled contentedly.

"You'll make a great old quartette," Gladys laughed.

"Sort of a mutual admiration society," Prue added.

"Phyl, I'd think you'd be jealous of this Daphne," Ann laughed. "Won't your nose be out of joint when she arrives?"

The twins stared at her in blank amazement.

"Jealous!" they said together. "Why, how perfectly silly."

"You might as well say that I might be jealous of Sally," Janet chuckled.

"No," Phyllis shook her head, "Jan and I couldn't possibly be jealous. We're twins, you see."

The little phrase ended all argument and doubt as it always did. The girls realized with something of a start how close the bond between them was, and they felt a glow of pride around their hearts. Affection like this was worthy of a place at Hilltop, and could be pointed out with pride.

"My Aunt Jane's Poll-parrot!" Sally exclaimed, jumping up. "Look at the time," and she held out her wrist watch. "Ten minutes past five. If we're going to meet Taffy we'd better hurry."

They found sweaters and started off down the long avenue that lead to the gate.

Prue turned to Gladys and Ann.

"Are the twins elected?" she inquired.

"They are," they replied. "To the very heart of Hilltop," Ann added.

They sauntered back to their room.

"Look at my beautiful bed that a perfectly good Countess has slept in," Gladys wailed, as she saw the contents of three drawers piled high on the blue and white counterpane.

"Oh, never mind that," Prue brushed some of the things aside and sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Speaking of Countesses," she began, "Janet wanted to know if anybody really important had ever slept in their room, and I thought it was a good chance for a ghost story."

"Of course, the very thing," Gladys agreed decidedly.

"We might as well have a good one while we're about it. You'd better make it up, Prue," Ann suggested.

Gladys had been gazing out of the window; she turned half way around now.

"Don't have to make it up," she said slowly. "There's a perfect cracker-jack about a pretty lady popping off the balcony when they brought in her lover who had been shot in a duel."

"Which balcony was it?" Prue demanded.

Gladys's eyes twinkled. "Well, it might just as well have been theirs," she said.

The other two nodded in understanding.

CHAPTER VIII—More Twins

The twins and Sally were breathless when they reached the gate, but they were in time to see two carriages coming down the turnpike.

"Two carriages!" Phyllis exclaimed.

"Maybe they're not both for here," Janet replied.

Sally smiled a broad smile.

"Oh, but they are," she said.

"What's the mystery?" Phyllis demanded.

"Wait and see," was all the satisfaction Sally would give them.

They watched the carriages as they crawled along. The little station of Hillsdale did not boast taxicabs, but contented itself to the old-fashioned surreys driven by talkative old negroes.

At last the first carriage turned in at the gate and the girls saw Daphne and her mother sitting on the back seat. They jumped on the steps, and Phyllis climbed in beside the driver.

Daphne at their unexpected appearance was so delighted that she fairly danced, and Mrs. Hillis, who had feared Daphne's silence on the way up from the station was the first sign of homesickness, was relieved.

Daphne had tight hold of Janet's hand. A year ago she had understood, when things looked very black for Phyllis's twin. And now the tables were turned, and in this new world of boarding school she looked to Janet.

Janet gave her hand a tight squeeze.

"Taffy, it's so good to see you," she said.

"At first we were just sick that you couldn't come with us, but really, it's

more fun this way," Phyllis turned around in her seat as she spoke and saw the other carriage still following.

"Why, look," she said. "That is coming here, too." But Sally interrupted her.

"The twins are regular old girls now at Hilltop," she said to Daphne. "Oh, isn't it great we're all four together!"

Mrs. Hillis smiled. Her laugh was a little like Daphne's.

"How happy you girls are," she said. "I was a little worried about Daphne's coming so far away from home, but now I know Mrs. Ladd was right. I can see by your faces that Hilltop is a vast improvement over Miss Harding's."

The girls nodded an eager agreement.

"Here we are!" Sally exclaimed excitedly as they drew up before the steps.

"What a beautiful place!" Mrs. Hillis said warmly.

"Don't you feel like the President in the White House when you walk up and down these steps?" Daphne drawled.

"Well, you do feel awfully important," Janet agreed.

A maid met them at the door and took Daphne's bag.

"If you all-ll come dis way, I'll show you just where to go," she said.

Mrs. Hillis and Daphne followed her, and the girls waited in the square hall.

"Who under the sun is in that next carriage?" Janet demanded.

"Wait and see," Sally replied provokingly.

"Oh, I know," Phyllis exclaimed. "It's another new girl. She's going to be in the new wing. I heard Kitty and Alice talking about it in history class today."

"Indeed," Sally asked politely.

The maid came back just as the other carriage stopped. A man and two girls got out and came up the steps. Sally clutched each of the twins by an arm and pulled them in to a sheltering window recess.

"Now don't scream when you see what's coming," she whispered.

The maid was taking the bags. They could hear the man's voice asking for Miss Hull. The twins looked out from their hiding place.

Two girls stood in the doorway; the old lantern that swung from the porch illuminated their faces. They had red hair and they were dressed exactly alike.

"Twins!" Janet exclaimed in a muffled voice, and Phyllis looked bewildered.

[image]

"Twins!" Janet exclaimed in a muffled voice

"Isn't it a lark?" Sally demanded. "The minute the old wing gets a pair of twins the new one has to follow suit."

They heard Daphne's voice and saw her with her mother and Miss Hull coming down the hall. They went forward to meet them as the new twins and their father followed the maid in the same direction, and under the center light exactly in the middle of the hall they all met.

All four twins looked at each other. Janet and Phyllis saw that their rivals were easily distinguishable one from the other. For although their faces were exactly alike, one was considerably stouter than the other.

It was Miss Hull's low musical laugh that broke the awkward silence.

"How did our little surprise turn out, Sally?" she asked.

"Oh, beautifully, Miss Hull," Sally laughed. "Jan and Phyl never guessed for a minute."

Miss Hull smiled delightedly and turned to the gentleman who was waiting for her.

"Mr. Ward," she said, holding out her hand.

Mr. Ward scowled.

"Yes'm. They're my twins; May and Bess," his abrupt way of speaking contrasted oddly with his southern voice. "If you can take them right now and let me get back and catch that next train for town I'll be mighty obliged. I kept the carriage waiting."

"Certainly, Mr. Ward," Miss Hull replied, "You go right on. We'll take care of May and Bess."

Mr. Ward bowed over her hand for a brief moment, nodded to his daughters and strolled out of the front door.

The Ward twins's faces relaxed and they smiled. It was easy to see that their father's departure was a relief rather than a sorrow.

CHAPTER IX—A Question of Names

"May and Bess are to be in the new wing," Miss Hull said. "Will you girls take them upstairs when you are going up with Daphne and find some of the girls on

their corridor. Alice and Kitty will take good care of them, I am sure. Mrs. Hillis and I are going to have a little chat until dinner."

She dismissed the girls with a nod. Sally turned to Bess Ward.

"Will you come along?" she said, "and we'll find Alice and Kitty."

"Are you two going to room together?" Phyllis inquired.

Janet was walking with Daphne. She had gotten as far away as possible from the new twins, for she instinctively disliked them on sight.

"I should say we're not," Bess, the fatter of the two, replied. "May and I were figuring to see as little of each other as possible."

"But why?" Phyllis demanded, surprised.

"Reckon we're not dying of love for each other," May explained calmly. "You being a twin could understand, I guess."

"We can't understand any such thing," Janet suddenly flared up.

They were on the stairs and they all stopped to turn and look at her.

"Phyl never wants to be away from me," she continued, her cheeks hot in anger.

"I don't hear Phyl agreein' with you," May remarked.

It was Phyllis's turn to be angry. The color left her cheeks and her eyes flashed dangerously.

"No need of my saying anything for people to know that I agree with my twin," she said coldly. "We always agree on every subject," and she walked upstairs the rest of the way in silence with her head up in the air.

The new twins exchanged glances.

"What did you say anything for?" Bess asked sulkily.

"Oh, keep still," May replied.

When they reached the new wing, Sally was glad to turn them over to Kitty and Alice. The news had circulated that there were to be twins for the new wing, and the girls had collected to welcome them. It is only truthful to say that their faces fell at the first glance. Beside Phyllis and Janet, the new twins did not show promise of adding greatly to the new wing.

"Phew! I'm glad that's over!" Sally sat down on her bed and pulled Daphne down beside her.

Phyllis sat in a big chair and Janet perched on the arm of her chair.

"They haven't any right to be twins," Daphne's drawl held a note of decision, "and they really don't look alike either."

"They're perfectly horrid," Janet replied vehemently.

"I wish they'd leave Hilltop," Phyllis added.

Sally said nothing for the moment, but she looked very wise.

"A penny for your thoughts, Sally," Phyllis offered.

Sally came back from her dreaming with a little start.

"I was only wondering what they'd be like in six months," she said slowly.

"Horrid," said Janet without a moment's hesitation.

Sally smiled. "That's how little you know of Hilltop," she said.

"Oh, who cares what they're like!" Phyllis laughed. "They're in the new wing and we're in the old. All that matters is that Daphne's here, and we four are together again."

Daphne gave a queer little laugh.

"It's pretty wonderful," she admitted, "to find you all just the same. I was afraid that perhaps Sally had found a new pal, and that perhaps you two have discovered some other girls. It rather worried me."

The rest laughed, and Janet said:

"Taffy, my darling, you were growing an imagination. You kill it before it becomes dangerous."

Snatches of a song came to them from the hall and Sally jumped up and ran to the door.

"Come in, you three," she called.

Prue, Ann and Gladys entered.

"We thought we would let you have the first few minutes in peace," Prue began, but Ann went straight to Daphne and held out her hand.

"You're the very princess come to life," she said. "And we're awfully glad to welcome you at Hilltop."

"We thought Janet was making you up," Gladys added, "but we see she wasn't." She smiled her roguish smile at Daphne.

"Indeed, we are glad to welcome you to Hilltop," Prue held out her hand, "and specially glad for the old wing."

"We've been looking over the new twins and I can't say that they are very exciting. All they did was to scrap," Ann remarked.

"Oh, dear!" Phyllis sighed. "I suppose now they'll be the new twins, and we'll be the old twins."

Gladys looked at her and shook her head very slowly.

"They will not," she said emphatically. "For I have already named them the Red Twins, and Red Twins they shall be," she ended triumphantly.

She was right. The girls had always followed her lead, and they followed it faithfully in the naming of the Red Twins, and Janet and Phyllis, to the old wing's secret satisfaction, remained always The Twins.

CHAPTER X—The Parrot Is Consulted

“Nice poll, pretty poll!” Gladys stood by Sally’s window, where the girls had decided that Aunt Jane’s Poll-parrot lived in a magic cage.

“Polly want a cracker?” she continued coaxingly.

“What are you flattering my Aunt Jane’s Poll-parrot for?” Sally demanded with dignity.

“I want to find out if I’m going to make the Archery Contest tomorrow,” Gladys replied, “and I don’t know anybody but Aunt Jane’s Poll-parrot that can tell me.”

“You might ask her about the rest of us,” Prue suggested, and Gladys turned back to the window.

“How about Prue, Polly?” she inquired seriously.

“... Oh, is that so?”

“... Well, perhaps you’re right.”

“... Very well, I’ll tell her.”

She turned back to the laughing group of girls.

“Aunt Jane’s Poll-parrot says that Prue couldn’t hit the side of a barn door, and he advises her to serve lemonade on the side lines.”

Prue sniffed contemptuously.

“Just to show you that that bird is a fraud, I’ll make a bull’s-eye tomorrow.”

A shout greeted her threat. Prue had never even hit the target, but every year she tried again, for the hope that she might some day make the archery team for the old wing burned bright in her heart.

“What’s the gossip about the new wing?” Ann inquired. “It would be simply terrible if they got the cup this year.”

Gladys frowned and shook her fist at imaginary Polly.

“That’s the trouble with the new wing,” she said. “They’re so beastly efficient, and they really have good material to work with.”

"Meaning that we haven't?" Ann inquired indignantly.

"No, but they have six in the old team back this year, and we have only three. Gwen's really upset about it. Of course, as captain of sports, she has to be neutral, but everybody knows she wants the old wing to get it."

"I heard the Red Twins bragging awfully," Daphne said. She had been at Hilltop for a week now and had found her place already. She was so thoroughly likeable that the girls gave her their instant affection. "The twins and Taffy are just like old girls," was a constant phrase.

"Were there ever two girls as bumpitious as those two?" Gladys demanded.

Ann looked up with a twinkle in her eye.

"I know of only one other," she replied. "She was an impudent little wretch, named Gladys Manners."

"Hum, I knew you were going to say that," Gladys replied, her temper not one bit ruffled. "And it's almost true. I was an awful smarty, but then I was only ten years old."

"And it didn't take you long to reform, I'll say that for you," Ann admitted.

"It couldn't have, because butter wouldn't melt in her mouth my first year," Prue laughed at a sudden memory now two years old. "If I even raised my voice above a whisper, the little imp would remind me that I was a new girl, and here I was a whole year older than she was."

"Mercy, we must be careful, Jan," Phyllis said, and Janet nodded.

"Do you suppose we've been here long enough to call Taffy down if she's noisy?" she inquired. "I'd just love to call Taffy down."

Daphne's cool gaze rested on Janet, then she laughed her funny little laugh.

"Guess I'll have to stay through the Christmas vacation to get even with you," she drawled.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," Sally protested. "I just had a letter from mother today and she says she's planning with Auntie Mogs Carter the most scrumptious Christmas Eve party, and I'd like to see you dare stay away from it."

Gladys turned back to the window and her private conversation with Aunt Jane's Poll-parrot.

"Why, Poll, you never told me that New York girls gave parties," she complained.

But the New York girls were too busy discussing Mrs. Ladd's letter to notice her.

"Merciful gumption!" Phyl exclaimed a few minutes later. "There goes sweet dreams."

The others stopped to listen. From the farthest end of the hall came the soft chimes of the grandfather clock. The little melody sounded like a slumber song,

and the girls all called it sweet dreams.

"I thought it was about eight o'clock," Ann protested. "I haven't even looked at my history."

"Well, I hate to be inhospitable," Sally said, "but I must set the example to Taffy; she's a new girl, you know."

"You never would know it," Prue said with a little smile. "Taffy and the twins are part of the spirit at Hilltop, and have been for centuries. Who dares to call them new?"

"Very prettily said, Prue darling," Sally laughed. "But, out you go, just the same and seek your own little beds."

Gladys put her arm protectingly around Prue.

"Never mind, lamb child. You can come and orate to your two long-suffering room-mates."

They all left the room, finishing their good-nights in the hall.

The twins went straight to bed. Each night at Hilltop saw them thoroughly but happily tired out.

"Do you think the Red Twins have a chance?" Phyllis inquired sleepily.

"Awfully afraid they have," Janet answered. "I saw them practicing today, and they made awfully good scores."

"Well, cheer up, perhaps they'll be nervous tomorrow, with the entire school looking on."

A muffled chuckle came from the depth of Janet's pillow.

"What are you laughing at?" Phyllis demanded.

"The idea of the Red Twins being fussed by anything. Why those girls have got the assurance of Diana herself. I wish you could see them string their bows."

"The responsibility of being the twins for the old wing is growing daily," Phyllis laughed. "I'm worse than Prue when it comes to a straight eye, so I suppose we're doomed for one defeat."

"We're doomed for no such thing," Janet denied hotly.

But an inarticulate murmur was all the response she received from Phyllis.

"Oh, go to sleep then, lazy bones!" she said, and snuggled deeper into her pillow.

She was soon dreaming that the Red Twins were making bull's-eyes with every arrow that they loosed.

When the sun, red gold in his morning splendor, sent his first shafts through the woods, throwing queer patterns on the green lawn, he surprised two girls, busy with their bows and arrows. They had flaming red hair, and the sun always jealous of competition scowled behind a tiny white cloud.

CHAPTER XI—The Archery Contest

On the day of the Archery Contest, lessons stopped at noon at Hilltop. By two o'clock all the girls were assembled on the south lawn. They all wore immaculate white dresses, that contrasted prettily with the autumn colors. A stack of bows, their strings loosened, stood against the bench near the target and a heap of feathered arrows lay on the ground.

Under the shade of a big tree, the score board flashed forth in white letters, "Archery Day."

Forty girls were competing. You could pick them out from among the others by their eager expectant expression.

The faculty in the daintiest of gowns were making the guests, who had driven in from all around the countryside, as comfortable as possible in the grey wicker chairs that had been brought down from the school, and placed in a half circle back of the shooters. They came because they loved the pretty sight of the girls in their white dresses on the green lawn, with the old mansion as a background, rather than for any real interest in Archery.

There were tables under the trees, where, after the contest, lemonade would be served to the girls, and tea to the guests and faculty.

Prue at the last moment had decided not to enter.

"Why swell the number of the old wing failures?" she said to Gwen, and Gwen nodded, fully conscious of the sacrifice she was making; and to repay her for it, she made her official score-keeper.

The twins, with Sally and Daphne, and Gladys and Ann, formed a little group with her around the board.

"Prue, if I make a score, will you please write it very large?" Phyllis requested. "I don't expect to make more than one, and it would be a comfort really to see it."

"I'm as nervous as a cat," Sally shivered. "I have a horrible feeling that the old wing is going to lose."

"Oh, don't even breathe it!" Gladys wailed. "The very idea makes me turn cold all over."

"My hands are icy," Ann held them out for inspection. They were beautiful hands, firm and capable, but they trembled ever so slightly.

Gwen and Poppy joined them.

"I declare you all look like picked chickens," Poppy protested, "I never saw the old wing hang its head so low."

The girls straightened up, every chin lifted with determination.

"That's better," Gwen encouraged. "If you feel like dropping them again, just look at the new wing."

"The Red Twins are positively walking on air," Sally ground her teeth and looked appealingly at Phyllis.

Phyllis put up one hand in entreaty.

"Don't look at me like that," she entreated. "I'm only in the contest because you and Jan insisted. I won't even hit the target, and I know it."

"Never mind, I will," Janet comforted; "though, of course, we won't beat the Red Twins."

"I've put them together, and Phyllis and you directly after," Gwen explained; "then you'll see what you're up against. It isn't as bad as it looks. We still have Agnes Leiter, Puss Boroughs, and Poppy, all last year's team girls, and Marion West has been practicing all summer. She only missed out by a point for the team last year. Then there are a couple of Juniors, that have belonged to archery clubs at home, so we may pull through."

"But look what we're up against," Gladys groaned.

A bell tinkled as Miss Hull walked out of the hall, a soft grey dress floating about her, and a shade hat on her aristocratic head. It was a signal for the contest to begin.

Gwen had arranged the order cleverly. The girls who had been on the team the year before were played off first. As there were six to three in favor of the new wing, the score looked very one-sided, as Prue marked it on the board.

Then came the younger girls, who stood very little chance of scoring the required six points. They were worked off quickly, and then the real work began. Two girls from the new wing, would alternate with two girls from the old wing. Cheering followed every score, so that it was impossible to tell which side was ahead.

"Ann, you're up after Kitty," Gwen said as she hurried by. "Mind, you do us proud."

"Do my best," Ann replied shortly. She was working her fingers to take some

of the stiffness out of them.

Kitty took her place marked by white tape.

"She's too little to be really dangerous," Phyllis laughed, as she strung her bow.

Kitty shot rapidly, but with a nice precision. Only one of her arrows went astray, and that pinned the leg in the target.

The other four hit. Two on the white, counting two, one on the red, counting three. Kitty waited an effective moment before she loosed the fifth.

"Make it a bulls-eye," one of the Red Twins shouted.

The arrow went its way through the air, and bore deep into the broad red circle.

"Making eight in all," Prue said in satisfaction. "Ann will do better than that."

"Look," Sally pointed across the lawn, where the Red Twins were sitting, their special bows lying across their knees. Kitty and Louise Brown were swooping down upon them.

"Don't you ever do that again, Bess," Kitty said angrily. "If you have any silly advice, and you feel you must yell it out, you're to wait until the player has finished. Do you understand?"

"I told her to keep still," May grumbled, "but she wouldn't do it."

"You see that she does next time," Louise advised.

The girls walked on. Their lecture had made no impression whatever on Bess Ward. She tossed her head with a great show of indifference, and started whistling.

"Yes, she's decidedlyumptious," Gladys said quietly, as Ann rose to take her place. "If she so much as breathes aloud, when you're up, I'll murder her," and Gladys fastened her eyes on the Red Twins, and looked so threatening, that Bess squirmed uncomfortably.

Ann did everything that she did methodically, and though her hands may have been cold, none of the onlookers, who watched her carefully string her bow and fit her arrow, guessed it.

"Don't watch her, it gives her fits," Prue whispered almost in tears.

So the girls directed their gaze towards the target. One arrow whanged through the air and hit the red, so near to the bulls-eye, that the spectators gasped. Another arrow fell just beside it. The third pinned the blue, and the fourth and fifth returned to the red, in a little cluster.

"Fourteen, oh my Aunt Jane's Poll-parrot!" Sally exclaimed. "How perfectly beautiful!"

"I knew she'd do it," Prue exulted, as she wrote the number down, in broad white letters.

"Your turn, Sally," Gladys said. "You've got Louise's twelve to beat."

Sally groaned, but when she took her place, her wonderful blue eyes blazed from their setting of raven hair.

Four arrows sped through the air in quick succession. Sally did everything with a rush. The girls counted the total.

"Eleven," Phyllis groaned.

"If the next one is wide of the target——" Gladys did not finish the terrible thought.

They looked at Sally. She didn't look a bit flustered, but for some reason or other, she was taking her time.

Then she did a curious thing, but a thing so like Sally that neither the girls nor the faculty could repress a smile.

She suddenly closed her eyes very tight, and without taking aim, let go of her arrow.

"Aunt Jane's Poll-parrot!" Gladys whispered, as though she were praying the mythical bird to carry the arrow safe to the target.

Daphne put her hands over her eyes, and didn't take them down until the shout that rose high and clear told her that Sally's blind shot had found its way home.

"A blue!" Janet almost screamed. "Just one point more than she needed to beat Louise."

Sally threw down her bow, and came back to them.

"So much for that," she said grinning.

"Sally Ladd, I declare you're a caution!" Poppy squeezed her hand. "Whatever made you take such a terrible chance, child?"

"Oh, life's a chance," Sally replied airily. "When I'm in a hole, I always trust in my luck, and it never fails me."

From that minute "Sally's luck" was added to the phrases of Hilltop.

CHAPTER XII—Janet to the Rescue

Daphne was the next up, after two more new wing girls had made creditable scores.

“She looks like Diana herself,” Miss Hull said, to the old gentleman who was sitting beside her, and indeed Daphne’s beauty never showed to such advantage, as when she stood beside her bow. But alas! looks are not everything. Although the beautiful curve of Daphne’s arm, covered by its sheer angel sleeve, was grace itself, the refractory arrows fell almost anywhere but on the target. Only one struck home, and marked the red.

“Three,” Prue wrote the number down slowly.

“What a pity!” Miss Hull said, but she noted Daphne’s cheerful little smile, and nodded to herself. “Sally Ladd has very good taste in friends,” she said, as her eyes traveled to the Twins, and then back to Daphne.

“Can’t say I made a very brilliant success,” Daphne was saying, and she threw herself down on the grass beside Janet.

“Well, one landed, and it was a red anyway,” Janet tried to be consoling.

“And that’s more than many of the new girls have made,” Sally added.

“I’ll be with you in a minute, Taffy,” Phyllis laughed. “Just wait until the Red Twins have had their turn.”

“Hush, here they come now,” Gladys cautioned.

A silence fell on the spectators as they awaited the victory of the new wing. Even the faculty felt it, and though they tried to be happy, they were conscious of a persistent little feeling of disappointment.

Bess Ward was the first one up. She shrugged her shoulders just to show she was not in the least nervous, then she strung her bow, struck a rather extravagant attitude, and loosed her first arrow.

She made a red. A faint cheer followed it.

The Red Twins were far from popular with their own wing, but anything or anybody that could enlarge the score was welcome.

"Not so good," Ann said critically, as the second arrow glanced off and hit the white.

A slow red mounted to Bess's cheek. She was angry, that unpardonable sin in any sport, and she showed it. The third arrow went to the blue. Bess forgot to shrug her shoulders. Her anger was steadily mounting, and the next two arrows followed each other to the red, making a total score of twelve.

Prue marked it down on the board very slowly, and very deliberately.

"Hope her twin does no better," Gladys said. "But I suppose she will."

"One of them has got to make a bulls-eye, after all their boasting," Ann laughed. "Look, there she comes."

May took her place at the tape. She was considerably sobered by her sister's failure. She did not shrug her shoulders, but went to her bow with a dark scowl.

Her first arrow hit the blue. She stopped to readjust her bow, before fitting in the second arrow, but the blue claimed that as well. Really angry now, she shot the third with such a vicious whang, that the arrow glanced off to the white.

"Take your time," her sister cautioned from the side line. Her tone held a note of resentment.

May pulled herself together, and took deliberate aim. Two blues were her award.

"Making a total of nine," Prue said as she drew an extra long stem to the figure.

"Jan, if you go in, and get a half-way decent score, and Phyl does, too, we won't be so badly licked after all," Gladys said.

Janet nodded. There was a lump in her throat and she could not trust herself to speak.

"If I don't stop trembling, my arrows will land over there among the faculty," Phyl pointed to the right of the target, where the faculty sat out of range of any but the wildest shot.

Daphne looked at her, and saw that she really was trembling.

"Well, goodness knows I love all the faculty at Hilltop," she said in her peculiar drawl. "But if you must shoot one of them, please choose Miss Jenks, for I haven't my history prepared for tomorrow."

The one thing that Phyllis needed was to laugh, and she did heartily, with the result that when she took her place at the tape, her nerves were steadied, and her thoughts were on Daphne's last remark. She could see Miss Jenks out of the corner of her right eye. She hardly gave the target a thought, until her arrow was in her bow.

Her total score was five, for though she did some fancy shooting, around

the legs of the target, only two of her arrows scored.

She came back to the girls, a little crestfallen.

"You mean thing!" Daphne said, "you made two more than I did."

Phyllis smiled in spite of herself.

"It's a secret, Taffy, but I'll tell you," she whispered. "That last one was a mistake."

"Good luck, Jan!" Sally called softly, as Janet went out to take her place. Her silence seemed to envelope her as she stood facing the target, and the bow felt strange to her touch.

She had practiced a good deal during the past few weeks, but mindful of her brother Tom and the wisdom of her boy friends, she had rested for the past two days, content only to keep her hand in. In this she had the advantage of the Red Twins, who had practiced for two hours, before breakfast.

She felt as though she were taking a very long time, as she strung her bow, and fitted her first arrow, and then she shot.

She had aimed for the bulls-eye, but the grass under her feet, worn by so many tennis shoes, was slippery. Her heel twisted ever so slightly, and the arrow scored a red.

The girls shouted their appreciation, but before they could stop, another arrow had hit this time, just below the bulls-eye, making one above, and one below. Janet shifted her position ever so slightly, and a third arrow almost touched the bulls-eye on another side.

The fourth completed the square; then Janet did the most spectacular thing, done that afternoon. She scored a perfect bulls-eye. The school, united in its admiration, went wild with joy, and the old man, sitting beside Miss Hull, shouted, "Well done, little lady, well done!"

[image]

Then Janet did the most spectacular thing done that afternoon

Janet was born high on the shoulders of the delighted girls, a happy, triumphant, but very much bewildered heroine.

CHAPTER XIII—Diverse Paths

It took the school, and particularly the old wing, several weeks to recover from the result of the contest. Janet, much to her surprise, remained a heroine, and was not forgotten after the flush of the first few days, but she was not happy.

Phyllis, after her failure on Archery Day, had steadfastly refused to have anything more to do with the sport, and half the pleasure of the prospect of making the team was gone, when Janet realized that Phyllis would not be with her. Daphne, too, refused to show any interest, and it was Sally that Janet spent most of her time with, practicing before the target.

They were coming up from the lawn this afternoon. The warm days of late summer had chilled with the coming of Autumn, and in the late afternoon the girls found sweaters comfortable.

When they reached the lower hall they met Ethel Rivers. She was still incorrigible on the subject of the wings.

“I hope you know, that even if you did beat us at Archery, we’re going to win out in Dramatics.”

“Win in anything your little heart wants,” Sally laughed; “the old wing is never selfish.”

“Well, you just wait and see,” Ethel began angrily, but she turned suddenly to Janet and stopped. “I’ve—I’ve—wanted to congratulate you for a long time,” she said shyly. She was the same age as the two girls before her, but a class below. She was feeling the difference acutely.

“Thanks awfully,” Janet was almost as embarrassed as she was. She was trying hard not to feel her position as a future member of the team, but it was difficult when girls like Ethel forgot their feeling of animosity long enough to offer congratulations.

Without realizing it Janet mounted the pedestal of a personage.

“I—I—really thought you were wonderful,” Ethel continued grudgingly, “and I’m not a bit sorry, really, that you beat our twins.”

“That’s awfully decent of you Ethel. I’m glad to see you’re coming around to the right way of thinking. Mustn’t take the rivalry of the wings too seriously,

you know. Come down to target practice some day, while I'm there, and I'll show you how to fix your arrow. I saw you were having trouble with it." And Janet walked up the broad stairs, her head held high, as a queen might have walked on after she had spoken to her humble courtier.

But when they reached Sally's room and she threw herself down on the bed, her face suddenly fell.

"Sally," she said seriously. "I think Phyl is a little hurt that I spend so much time away from her. She's going to hate it if I make the team, so I think, if I am elected, I'll refuse."

Sally whistled then she looked seriously at Janet.

"You are going to do nothing of the kind, if I can help it," she said emphatically, "but we won't talk about it now. Let's go find Phyl and Taffy."

They went over to the Twin's room, but there was no sign of them.

"Maybe Glad'll know where they are," Sally suggested.

But they found Prue and Ann and Gladys cheerfully munching crackers and peanut butter, as they studied their English for the next day.

"Come and join us," Ann invited shoving forward the peanut butter. "We've got a marvelous system. Prue reads aloud to us and then we discuss it."

"You might as well join us," Gladys suggested. "We've only just started."

"We're looking for Daphne and Phil," Sally replied.

"Oh, you won't find them," Gladys told her. "They're down in the Senior's Retreat."

"What under the sun are they doing down there?" Janet demanded.

"Dramatic Club," Prue said solemnly. "Shakespeare meeting and all that sort of thing."

Sally and Janet looked at each other in bewilderment. "How did they get down there? They aren't Juniors or Seniors," Sally protested.

"Can't help it, Miss Slocum sent their names in to Poppy as shining lights in literature," Ann replied. "And Poppy, of course, was tickled to death."

"So was Helen Jenkins, by the way," Prue added. "She's really the brains of the club, while Poppy's the looks."

"And they're both Old Wing Girls," Gladys exulted. "Just imagine how they feel at the idea of letting in two Sophomores!"

"But it's unheard of," Sally objected, "don't you have to be a Junior at least, before you're eligible?"

"'Tisn't a rule, it's simply a custom," Ann told her. "It just never happened before, that the Sophomores showed very much brains."

"But, oh my beloved hearers!" Gladys exclaimed excitedly, "can't you see that our Phyllis and our Taffy may be the brilliant exceptions?"

Janet had looked wonderingly from one to the other of the girls.

"You don't mean Phil and Taffy could possibly make the Dramatic Club?" she asked at length.

"But I exactly do mean just that," Gladys informed her. "And, oh my Aunt Jane's Poll-parrot, if they should, think what a victory it would be for the Old Wing!"

Prue picked up the book that she had been reading when Sally and Janet interrupted her.

"I refuse to think of it," she said with decision. "Come on, girls, sit down and make yourselves comfy, and in my most dulcet tones I will read to you the lesson in *Guy Mannering* for tomorrow."

Janet and Sally curled up on the end of the Countess's bed and Prue began.

It is a question whether any of the girls kept their mind on the book. The Dramatic Club at Hilltop was a very important institution of school life. There were hardly ever more than twelve members, and they were chosen for a variety of reasons. The principal one was an understanding and appreciation of literature, but equally important were good looks and an ability to act, for the Dramatic Club gave two plays a year. They were not the usual amateur performances, for wise Miss Slocum, with the aid of the Seniors, chose her material carefully and trained it exceedingly well.

She had hesitated a long time before suggesting two Sophomores for possible membership, but Daphne's bewildering beauty and Phyllis's apt reading of lines finally persuaded her.

The Juniors and Seniors had accepted this innovation of an old custom with surprise, but, as Poppy had explained, it would not be necessary to make a decision at once, for the Dramatic Club was never chosen until just before the Christmas holidays.

The girls who were interested met in the Senior Retreat twice a week and read plays of their own or Miss Slocum's selection. The meeting was over at six o'clock.

Daphne and Phyllis hurried to the latter's room as quickly as possible.

"Taffy, was there ever such luck?" Phyllis exclaimed, "wasn't it adorable of them to let us be there!"

"Indeed it was," Daphne agreed heartily. "And we're only new girls, too, and that makes it all the nicer. But, Phil, what do you suppose they really mean?"

Phyllis shook her head and her brows puckered in a puzzled frown.

"I wish I knew, Taffy," she replied slowly. "When I went in, Poppy squeezed my arm and Helen Jenkins asked me how I liked the Dramatic Club pin."

"And when you said you loved it, she asked you how you would like to wear one," Daphne finished for her. "I know, I heard it, and my heart just flopped right over."

Phyllis walked to the balcony and stood looking out over the lawn.

"Isn't it funny the way people get jumbled up," she said musingly. "We four haven't paired off as we ought to. It almost looks as if we had changed partners. Just look at this afternoon. Jan and Sally were practicing with their ever-lasting bows and arrows, and you and I were sitting in all our glory in the midst of the Dramatic Club."

"That's what makes us such bully good friends," Daphne explained. "It doesn't matter which two of our four are together, they are bound to have a good time, and the very best times of all are when we are not paired off, but doing something that we can all enjoy."

Phyllis nodded. "I used to think, at Miss Harding's that we weren't so very remarkable, and that if we got away to boarding school we'd find plenty of friendships as strong as ours—"

"What nonsense!" Daphne interrupted, drawling the words until they held a wealth of scorn. "Prue and Gladys and Ann are a wonderful combination but they're not nearly as wonderful as we are," she added with her queer little laugh.

They both picked up books and pretended to study.

"Taffy," Phyllis said suddenly, "it really isn't fair." There was a little catch in her voice.

Daphne looked up from her copy of *Guy Mannering*. "What isn't?" she inquired.

"My being chosen, when Janet's left out. She knows twice as much about books as I do. Why she knew every book in *The Enchanted Kingdom*, and she can quote poetry by the yard."

"But she can't recite it the way you do," Daphne protested. "You read Rosalind's lines in *As You Like It* when we had it in class, until I honestly thought I was in the Forest of Arden. I agree with you that Jan loves it and appreciates it as much as you, but she reads it as though she hated to have to share it with anybody else."

"Perhaps you're right," Phyllis sounded only half convinced. "But I'll tell you this, if Jan isn't elected to the Dramatic Club, I won't join even if they ask me."

"Oh, yes you will," Daphne drawled. Her words were almost an echo of Sally's used earlier in the day under a similar circumstance.

CHAPTER XIV—The Story of the Two Dogs

That night Sally and Daphne held a council of war in their room. It began by Sally saying: "I want to talk to you, Taffy, about something important." To which Daphne replied, "Very well, go ahead, but remember to ask me what I have to tell you when you finish!"

"All right, mine's about Jan." Sally made herself comfortable in the big chair and Daphne curled up on the window seat. "On the way back from target practice today, she informed me that she would not be on the team, even if she got the chance, because Phyl might be hurt."

Instead of looking angry or concerned, as Sally expected, Daphne laughed heartily.

"I don't think it's funny, she really meant it," Sally protested.

Daphne stopped laughing. "It is funny though, listen. This afternoon, after we had come up from the Senior's Retreat, Phyl told me the same thing."

"But I don't understand."

"About Jan, of course."

"You mean she said she would be hurt if Jan did accept for the team?"

"Oh, no, you ought to know Phyl better than that. She said she wouldn't accept for the Dramatic Club unless Jan was asked, too. There now, what do you think of that?"

Sally listened and after a mystified minute understood.

"Well, of all the ridiculous children!" she exclaimed laughing.

"Yes, but what are we going to do about it? They simply can't be allowed to spoil each other's chances like that," Daphne objected.

"Oh, we can fix that, now that we know about them both," Sally exclaimed. "Look, we'll do it this very minute." She jumped up and went to the writing table, found a half sheet of notepaper and began to write.

Daphne looked over her shoulder.

"Will that do?" Sally inquired as she finished and carefully blotted the page.

"Couldn't be better," Daphne laughed. "Thank goodness, you can always depend on the Twins to see the funny side of everything."

"I can't wait until morning to give it to them," Sally announced. She was half undressed but she slipped into a kimono and tip-toed into the hall. She poked the letter under the Twins's door and hurried back to the waiting Daphne.

"Wish I could see their faces when they read it," she said.

Janet saw the note first.

"What is that?" she demanded, drawing Phyllis's attention to it.

"Looks like a letter," Phyllis replied smiling at Janet's apparent concern. "Anyway, I don't think it's a bomb, so it might be safe to pick it up."

"You never can tell." Janet stood looking down at the white envelope. "It may be a joke, and then again it may be a communication from one of the numerous ghosts that haunt Hilltop. You'd better pick it up, Phyl."

Phyllis leaned down and looked at the letter. "Sally's writing, so it can't be dangerous," she said as she picked it up and opened it.

"Oh, it's for both of us. It says: 'Read this aloud' in large letters. Listen—

"Dear Twins: (she read)

Once upon a time there were two dogs. One was an Irish terrier and the other was a poodle, and they loved each other as only dogs can. The Irish terrier liked to run and jump, but the poodle liked to sit still and look very beautiful.

One day they were both very hungry, and they both went hunting but they did not go together.

The Irish terrier met a kind old gentleman who offered him a bone, but the silly dog wouldn't take it because he thought of his friend who was so hungry, too.

Now the poodle, on his walk, met a kind old lady, and she offered him a nice bone, too, but he thought of the poor hungry terrier and he refused to eat it.

So both of those nice dogs died of hunger, because they were so foolish, but of course it would never have happened if they had each known that the other was being offered a bone. This tale has a moral!"

Janet and Phyllis looked at each other, and then burst out laughing.

"I know what it means," Phyllis said at last. "At least I think I do."

"Of course, it means the Archery Team and the Dramatic Club," Janet answered. "I told Sally today that if I am elected I didn't think I'd accept, because it would take me away from you so much."

Phyllis' arm encircled Janet's shoulder, and she rubbed her soft cheek against hers.

"I told Taffy exactly the same thing about the Dramatic Club," she said, "and of course you might know they would have a fit."

"I didn't know about the Dramatic Club until after I'd told Sally," Janet admitted.

"And I didn't think about Archery when I talked to Taffy. I was just angry at the thought of Miss Slocum choosing me when you know twice as much," Phyllis protested.

"But I don't," Janet denied. "Imagine my acting in anything! Why, I'd perfectly hate it in the first place, and in the second I'd die of fright."

Phyllis looked at her doubtfully. She still hated the idea of being in something that had no place for Janet.

"Then I suppose—" she began.

"That we may as well each eat our own bones," Janet finished laughing, "as long as there are two of them; and after all if you should make the Dramatic Club and I the Team it would help the old wing."

"Yes, of course, it would," Phyllis agreed. "But you're sure you don't care, Jan?"

"Of course, I don't, silly. I was only afraid you might. Let's answer Sally's letter."

They thought for several minutes, and the final result seemed to please them, for Janet stole softly across the hall, slipped the note under Sally's and Daphne's door, and knocked ever so lightly, before she hurried back.

Sally was almost asleep, but Daphne heard the knock. She jumped up, switched on the lights, and woke Sally.

"The Twins's reply," she announced as she opened the note.

"Read it quick," Sally said sleepily.

"The Story of the Two Dogs, continued (she read).

And so the two little dogs went home to die. But just as they were about to draw their last breath, the nice old gentleman met the nice old lady, and they told each other about the dogs they had met on their walk, and about how foolish they had been.

'But Aunt Jane's Poll-parrot, this can't go on,' said the old gentleman.

'It would be silly to let it, wouldn't it?' drawled the nice old lady.

'We will go and tell them how foolish they are,' they said together.

So they went, and the two dogs were very glad to see them, and

when they learned that there was two bones, they jumped up and barked, and they each promised to eat one apiece, and never again to be so silly; because they realized that if they ate enough bones they would grow strong, and perhaps some day they would be a credit to the wing, it was a very old wing, of the dog kennel where they lived."

"The satisfying thing about the Twins is that they always do what's expected of them," Daphne commented as she folded the note up. "The beginning of the Two Dogs was brilliant enough but the end—"

"The end is a masterpiece," Sally replied, now wide awake.

"Aunt Jane's Poll-parrot marked you as the old gentleman."

"Well, how about 'drawled the nice old lady'?"

"Oh, it was a masterpiece all right, and I loved the touch about the wing."

Daphne went back to her own bed.

"That, my child, is the first real stirring of the spirit of Hilltop—loyalty. Oh, for the day when we are Seniors!" Sally yawned and stretched her white arms high above her head. "Think of it, Taffy, Seniors, our four!" she added drowsily, but this time Daphne was asleep.

CHAPTER XV—Making Plans

"Well, it would be a calamity anywhere else in the world, but nothing is ever bad at Hilltop." Gwendolyn Matthews and Poppy were in the Twins' room, and a crowd of girls were listening to what they had to say with flattering attention.

"Not even Thanksgiving away from home?" Prue demanded with a little pout.

It had just been decreed by Miss Hull and the faculty that there would be no Thanksgiving recess this year. Several cases of measles had broken out in the past week, and the school doctor had ordered a quarantine. Such a thing had never happened before, and the seniors were doing their best to cheer up the many disappointed girls. Gwen and Poppy had selected Twins' room to go to first of all, for they were pretty sure that they would find a goodly number of the girls there.

"It's only four days, Prue," Poppy said consolingly, "and Miss Hull says we are to have a longer Christmas vacation to make up, besides no lessons for the four days now. You all must admit, that's fair enough."

"Of course, it's fair," Prue agreed readily; "but, well I had a very special engagement this Thanksgiving, and I hate to give it up."

"I was going to visit Ann's uncle," Gladys said sadly, "and now, of course, I can't."

"Well, you will some other time," Prue suddenly turned cheerful.

It is always so easy to make light of other people's disappointments, particularly when you are comparing them with your own. They always seem small in comparison.

"Don't be too sure of that," Ann laughed her quiet little laugh. "Uncle Lacey doesn't offer invitations very often, and he is not so terribly fond of me. He's probably delighted to receive my telegram, and has already made up his mind that he has done his duty to his sister's only daughter, and with a sigh of relief returned to his library."

"Poor Glad!" Sally laughed, "cruel uncle refuses second invitation and Ann and Glad have to find other host for Christmas." Both girls lived at a considerable distance from school.

"Not for Christmas," Ann denied. "I am going home for that blessed day, and so is Glad, aren't you honey?"

"I most certainly am," Glad replied. "Christmas is one day when I must be with my mother, not to mention my small brothers and sisters."

"What were *you* going to do that was so exciting, Prue?" Janet inquired carelessly.

"I was going to New York," Prue replied. "I have never been there in my whole life." She spoke as though she were ninety. "And Daddy promised to take me this year. We were going to meet my brother John, he's a freshman at Princeton, you know," she added with pride. "And, oh dear, we were going to have a simply wonderful time, and now just because the Red Twins and that horrid little Ethel Rivers have the measles, I can't go. John will be so disappointed."

"Don't worry about brother," Gladys teased. "It's my opinion that he will be quite relieved. Grown-up boys are never very crazy about their baby sisters, especially when their friends are around. You know, Prue darling, you may feel terribly grown-up, but you still wear your hair down your back, and to boys that means you are still a babe and beneath their notice."

"That isn't so at all, Glad," Prue protested. "John and I have always been the best of friends and he would like to introduce me to his friends, I know he would."

"John is in college now," Gladys spoke with cool and perfect assurance, "and that makes all the difference in the world. I guess I ought to know, I've had three

brothers at Yale."

"Perhaps that accounts for it, Yale isn't Princeton." Prue was almost in tears but she managed to smile as she said this.

The other girls laughed.

"I reckon you'd better admit defeat," Poppy teased. "Prue got ahead of you that time sure enough."

Gladys drew herself up, and tried to make her roly-poly little self look imposing as she replied:

"When Prue has had as much experience with brothers as I have, she will come to me and humbly beg my pardon and tell me I am right," she laughed suddenly. "Never will I forget the dance my youngest brother took me to when he was home for his first Christmas vacation. It was at the Country Club, and because it was Christmas all the younger kids went."

"I know about that kind of dance," Poppy interrupted. "Nobody has a very good time."

"Well, I know *I* didn't," Gladys admitted. "I felt very elegant when I left home. Ted had on full dress and looked magnificent, and I had let my best party dress down—" she stopped abruptly and fell to playing a tatoo on the arm of her chair.

"Go on, Glad, we're listening," Phyllis urged. "What happened when you arrived at the dance?"

Gladys looked from girl to girl, then she said quietly: "Nothing."

"Nothing?" Sally protested. "Oh, Glad, don't be irritating!"

"I'm not trying to be," Glad replied. "Simply nothing happened. Ted left me as soon as he found some of my old maid cousins that he could leave me with, and he only came back and danced with me once. He brought a boy to meet me that wore glasses because he was cross-eyed, and he stuttered. I danced with him once and then I went into the dressing room and took off my slippers. My feet were almost broken, and the next day they were black and blue. He had tramped all over them."

"Well?" several voices demanded as Gladys paused.

"There's nothing more to tell. I wept into somebody's opera cape until it was time to go home, and during the drive I fell asleep on Ted's shoulder. I didn't think he understood until the next day, when Mother asked me if I'd had a good time. I said I had, and after breakfast Ted took me to the village and filled me full of ice cream, and on the way home he explained very gently what a nice thing a sister could be, a sort of little comfort, you know, and then on the other hand, what a dreadful little bore. I didn't need the talk, I'd learned my lesson. I stay at home now and fix the studs in their dress shirts when they want to go out, and if it's cold I stay up and make hot soup for them, but I never ask to tag along."

Nothing was said after Gladys stopped, for a minute or two. The girls were all thinking hard. Most of them had brothers or cousins and they all understood.

"Perhaps if I'd treated my brother like that," Gwen said with a laugh that held sadness in it, "he might have been a better friend of mine now than he is; but I always tagged along and he got thoroughly sick of me. I dance about as well as your cross-eyed friend, Glad."

Phyllis was thinking of Tom, and being thankful that he was so much older than she and Janet, that they had never had the chance to make Gwen's mistake.

Janet was thinking of Peter and wondering. Peter Gibbs was a boy she had known back in Old Chester. They had shared the Enchanted Kingdom together, and he had taken the place of her brother long before Tom had arrived to claim the right. Janet was fonder of Peter than she really knew, and she found herself suddenly wondering if he had outgrown her, now that he was in college. She made a firm resolve to take Gladys's advice.

"Well, thank goodness, Chuck isn't in college yet," Daphne said suddenly, and Sally and the Twins laughed.

Then, as so often happens, when a room-full of people have been quietly thinking, everyone began to talk at once. They dismissed the subject of brothers and returned to the holidays. They made plans for all of the days, except Thanksgiving Day itself.

"Something's bound to happen then," Gwen assured them. "Miss Hull will probably ask one of the classes to entertain."

"You know it will be the Seniors," Poppy replied reproachfully, "and what we will do at so short notice I'm sure I don't know." This in Poppy's complaining tones made the girls all laugh.

"Cheer up, Poppy, we'll all help you, no matter what," Sally promised. "We might have a real old-fashioned pillow fight between the wings; that would liven us up a bit," she suggested. "I admit I feel rather depressed myself."

CHAPTER XVI—More Plans and Plots

But the plans for Thanksgiving Day were not entrusted to the Seniors as they expected. That night after dinner Miss Hull got up from her place at the Senior table, before she rang the little silver bell that always signalled the close of each meal.

Instant silence fell over the dining room, and the girls all turned to her expectantly.

“Girls,” she began, “I was more than sorry to have to ask you to give up your holidays, and I want to say how much I appreciate the splendid way you have all accepted the disappointment. You must make your own plans for most of the time. You are free to do as you like. I would suggest a picnic for one of the days. It is really not a bit too cold and it would be a good way to keep out of doors.

“On Thanksgiving day, I want you to be my guests at a Thanksgiving dinner.” The girls clapped their hands enthusiastically but Miss Hull had not finished.

“Just one more thing, girls please,” she went on. “Remember the girls that have the measles. They are sick in the Infirmary, and although you must remain on their account, just think how very much worse it is for them, and do what you can for them. Notes are always welcome when one is in the Infirmary, aren’t they?” she turned to Poppy.

“Yes, Miss Hull, most anything is,” Poppy replied, a worried expression on her usually placid face. She was wondering whom she could persuade to write to the Red Twins and Ethel Rivers. Kitty Joyce and Louise Brown she knew would be well taken care of. Miss Hull had a way of making a suggestion, and then leaving it to the Seniors to see that it was carried out.

The same thought was reflected on the face of every Senior. Gwen and Poppy found their solution in the Sophomore class. Their own particular pets could be depended on they know.

"We'll ask them after dinner," Gwen said, and Poppy nodded.

So, soon after dinner found the same group in one corner of the ballroom that had discussed the subject earlier in the day.

"We'll write, all of us," Ann announced, speaking as was her right as the oldest girl. She had been at Hilltop a year longer than any of the others. "And what's more, we will write really nice notes." She looked around the circle defiantly as though she dared any one of them to contradict her.

"We will," Prue agreed.

"Suppose so, though what I'll say, I'm sure I don't know," Gladys scowled at the prospect.

"Thank goodness, the measles stayed in the new wing. I hope none of us catch it," Sally remarked. "What else are we to do besides writing the notes?"

"I don't know. We'll have to think of something," Gwen replied.

"Why don't we serenade them?" Daphne suggested. "It's always fun to hear people sing, especially if they sing all the songs you like."

"Good idea," Poppy agreed. "We'll do that very thing. We'll sing some of the old plantation melodies and the old ballads that Miss Hull loves. Daphne, you and Janet come down to Seniors' Retreat in the morning. You have awfully pretty voices, both of you. I heard you singing in church, last Sunday."

"Sure it wasn't Phyl?" Ann inquired. "If you can tell the Twins apart in church, when their heads are bent reverently over their prayer books, you are doing more than I can."

Poppy laughed and pointed to the tiny crescent pin that Phyllis was still wearing.

"I couldn't at first," she admitted. "But Phyllis took off her coat and I saw that pin, then I watched them when the next hymn began, and she never opened her lips, so I said to myself, 'Janet has the voice.'"

"And, of course, Taffy looks as if she ought to sing, and she does," Gwen added.

"She looks like Diana at the chase, with a bow in her hand, too," Sally teased, "but she can't shoot."

Daphne blushed ever so slightly. "What an unfortunate turn the conversation has taken," she drawled. "Poppy, we will meet you in the morning, of course any time you say."

Janet nodded. "Love to, Poppy, I think it will be a lot of fun," she said.

"It's awfully decent of Miss Hull to give us a party," Sally remarked. "I know it will be something rather nice, she always does things so beautifully!" She paused and added after a second, "Wish we could do something for her."

It was only a germ of an idea, but it grew with amazing speed.

"I wish we could, too," Gwen said first.

Then Prue added, "So do I."

The rest nodded and it was Sally's turn again.

"Well, why don't we?" she said.

"Let's."

"Good idea."

"But what?" came the replies.

"I don't exactly know," Sally admitted. "The idea just popped into my head."

"A serenade," someone suggested.

"Not nice enough."

"How about tableaux, living pictures? Miss Hull loves those." It was Poppy who spoke.

The rest thought for a few minutes in silence. Just tableaux were not exactly the thing somehow. The idea lacked originality.

At last Gladys jumped and executed a silent but triumphant dance.

"Well, let's hear it." Ann knew Gladys better than any of her other friends, and she felt that the question had been solved.

"Well, I don't want to be forward or cheeky," Gladys began shyly, "and anyway it's just a suggestion."

"Let's have it," Gwyn demanded.

"Well," Gladys began again, "you all know how fond Miss Hull is of the stories that have come down about Hilltop." The rest nodded eagerly.

"Why couldn't we have tableaux representing all the Hilltop stories we know about?" she finished with a rush.

The girls looked their admiration.

"We can and we will," Poppy declared. "I declare, that's just the sweetest idea I ever heard!" She and Gwen went off to confer with the other Seniors, and the rest went back to Gladys' room.

"What tableaux would you have, Glad?" Prue inquired respectfully.

"Well, there's our Countess," Gladys replied. "There's a miniature of her own in the library, in the bookcase, that has all the souvenirs in it, and, as I remember it, she looks like Taffy."

"But where shall we find the costumes?" Phyllis inquired.

"Up in the attic. It's loaded with cedar chests full," Ann told her. "Miss Hull always lets us wear them when we give masquerades."

"Tell us about the rest of the characters," Sally said impatiently.

"Well, there's the poor unhappy lady that haunts the Twins' balcony," Gladys suggested with a perfectly straight face.

"The Twins' balcony?" Sally showed her surprise at this new adaption of an old tale, but neither Ann nor Prue moved a muscle as Gladys continued. It was the opportunity they had been waiting for, ever since Janet had expressed the wish

that their room had a ghost.

“Yes,” Gladys went on in a matter-of-fact tone, “the poor pretty lady that was standing on the balcony and looked down, and saw them bringing home the dead body of her lover. He had fought a duel with her brother, and the brother had killed him.”

“Oh, Glad, and you never told us!” Janet protested. “Was it really from our balcony?”

Sally who had caught Prue’s warning wink did not question any further. She knew as well as they did, that the famous haunted balcony was on the other side of the house, outside of one of the class rooms.

“Truth of the matter is, I didn’t intend to tell you at all,” Gladys said seriously. “Those things are not nice to know about. The servants, you know, all vow they have seen the ghost.”

Phyllis shivered. “Poor lovely lady” she said, “I’m awfully sorry for her, but I know I shall never sleep again.”

“What nonsense” Janet exclaimed. “The idea of believing in ghosts.”

The other girls did not agree with her that it was nonsense; they merely exchanged rather knowing glances.

Then Poppy and Gwen and some of the other Seniors came in, and the talk changed to plans for the tableaux.

It was decided to give six in all. They talked earnestly until the clock chimed the Happy Dreams, then the Seniors went back to their rooms, and the rest of the girls, after a few minutes’ more talk, to theirs.

Janet went straight to the balcony, when she and Phyllis were alone in their own room. She looked out into the lovely night, and in her vivid imagination she saw the whole scene, as Gladys had told it to her, unfold before her.

If Miss Slocum had seen her stretch out her arms, as she looked down with the eyes of the poor maiden upon the body of her lover, she might have wondered. In literature, Janet kept her emotions to herself, and the more a scene from Shakespeare touched, the more colorless was her voice as she read it. As she would have hated to have shared the Enchanted Kingdom with any one but Peter, so she hated to share her love of the romantic, and hold it up for possible ridicule.

“Jan, do come in from that horrible balcony,” Phyllis besought her. “I have the creeps every time I look at it.”

“Nonsense,” Janet replied shortly, but she came in, and it was not many minutes before she was in bed. Phyllis, in spite of her predictions to the contrary, was soon fast asleep, and Janet, though she tried to keep awake and think about the pretty lady, soon followed.

Neither of them ever knew how long they had been asleep, before they were conscious of a low moaning sound that came from the balcony.

Phyllis heard it first, and she leaned over and shook Janet's arm.

"Jan, listen, what is that horrible noise?" she demanded.

Janet, still very sleepy, sat up to listen. For a minute there was no sound, but the whisper of the wind in the trees. Then very faintly at first, but coming nearer and nearer, they heard a low moan.

Phyllis was in Janet's bed in a second, and was shivering against her. For the best part of a minute Janet was frightened, then her good sense came to her rescue. She had not lived in an isolated house in Old Chester, where the wind played queer tricks with echoes and the waves beat dismally against the shore, to be easily frightened.

"Oh, Jan, it's that woman, I know it is!" Phyllis was sobbing.

"Rats!" Janet replied inelegantly.

Before Phyllis could stop her, she had slipped out of bed and was creeping softly to the window. Phyllis was too frightened to speak. The moan came again, and this time a white arm waved through the open door. Phyllis put her head under the covers and did not see what followed.

Janet crept closer. She was conscious of the pounding of her heart, but she was not afraid. Instead, she rather enjoyed the possibility of catching a real ghost.

She watched the window for a minute and then, acting on a sudden impulse, she walked to the door. She put her ear to the keyhole, and, as she had half expected, she heard a very cautious whisper.

Without waiting a minute she caught the handle of the door and opened it suddenly.

Two kimonoed figures fell into the room. The noise was so loud that Phyllis felt no ghost could have been responsible for it, and she uncovered her head.

She saw, by the silver moonlight that was pouring in through the window, the prostrate forms of Prue and Ann, and she heard Janet say,

"Come in, won't you? If you are looking for Glad, she is out on the balcony."

CHAPTER XVII—The Tableaux

"Really, you girls choose the oddest time to visit!" Janet said the next morning after breakfast.

Gladys sneezed. "Don't rub it in," she begged; "it's bad enough as it is. I do think though, that when we took all that trouble to give you a real ghost, and I make an excellent ghost, if I do say so, that the least you could have done was to play up to it."

"Phyl did," Prue looked reproachfully at Janet. "Will you please tell me whatever made you think of opening that door?"

"She was going to call for help," Ann suggested.

Janet smiled a superior smile. "Hardly. I knew, of course, that it was a joke, and I rather suspected whose. I knew there was only one of you on the balcony, but I knew the other two would not be far off, so I tried the door, with what results, you already know."

"Jan Page, I am perfectly willing to take my medicine, but I will not be gloated over."

Gladys made a dive for Janet, and they rolled together in a rough-and-tumble fight.

In the midst of it Poppy came in.

"What are you two young ones up to?" she demanded. "Do stop, or you'll hurt yourselves and not be fit for the tableaux."

"We've decided about the one for the little lady that fell off the balcony," Gwen began. "We're going to have it in two scenes."

The girls could hardly keep their faces straight as they listened.

"Is Glad going to be the pretty lady?" Janet inquired innocently.

"No, we thought we'd use you and Phyl for that," Gwen went on with her explanation.

They discussed and changed their plans many days before Thanksgiving Day arrived, but when it did come, a little over a week later, it found them ready.

The rest of the school, when Poppy had told them of the scheme, had heartily endorsed it, and Thanksgiving morning found them all busy.

Some were fixing the ballroom with bows of evergreens, and some were busy preparing the refreshments. The girls who were interested in the Dramatic Club were taking care of the stage.

They had ransacked the old barn, where the scenery from year to year was stored, with a happy result. They had found a balcony that rather resembled a pulpit, a woodland back drop for the Countess to pose against as she had in the miniature, and an old spinnet for a famous composer.

The actors themselves were not allowed to do anything, for fear of tiring them, and no famous actress could have been taken more care of, than was Daphne.

The new wing had been a little difficult at first, for the suggestion had come from the old wing, and they were jealous, but the Seniors had smoothed things

over, and when the day came it found them all united.

Church took up most of the morning. It was a long walk to the little building set in a clump of protecting pines, where the school worshipped. The sermon was long, and it was not until after one o'clock that they reached Hilltop.

Luncheon was spread informally on the two long service tables, and the girls helped themselves. Dinner was to be at six o'clock, so that there would be plenty of time afterwards for the final preparations.

Miss Hull had been invited to come to the ballroom at eight o'clock, but apart from that, she had no idea what was going to happen. The girls had all kept it a profound secret, and only Miss Slocum of the faculty knew the plans.

"Daphne, darling, please don't stuff so," Janet implored in an agonized whisper behind Miss Jenks's back. "If you eat another mouthful, you will never be able to get into that bodice this evening."

"More secrets," Miss Jenks laughed. "It's a good thing we won't have to wait much longer, for I couldn't stand it."

"Neither could I," Miss Remsted agreed. "I can't remember ever being so curious or so excited."

"Tell us who's idea it was anyway?" Miss Jenks begged.

"It was a combination," Prue exclaimed. "Sally started it, and Glad finished it."

"What a truly wonderful combination!" Miss Remsted said smiling.

"I'm very proud of our table," Miss Jenks added.

The girls looked at Daphne, and the Twins and winked at each other. Their favorite teachers would have more cause to be proud later in the day.

After luncheon the entire school plunged into a whirl of work that lasted until time to dress for dinner.

"Best clothes, mind," Poppy had warned the girls; "white if you have it, Miss Hull loves to see the whole school in white."

The girls nodded, and hurried to their rooms, to appear a half-hour later in filmy white dresses, their hair tied by pink and blue bows.

"You look like a lot of dainty butterflies," Miss Hull told them delighted at the pretty picture they made. "I appreciate your wearing white, for I am sure you did it to please me. But I mustn't talk any longer, we have still that surprise ahead of us and it would never do to delay it."

They took their seats and there followed a meal of the kind one reads about in books—a typical southern dinner.

At every girl's place there was a dainty place card. Miss Remsted had painted them all, and every one was a little joke in itself. The Twins had green pods with two little peas in each, and written above it was "alike as."

Sally had a green poll-parrot with "My Aunt Jane's" written in front of it.

Daphne's read, "I excel with" and then a bow and arrow.

The tables were all decorated with baskets of fruit and nuts, and the snowy linen and shining silver gave the beautiful old hall a splendid aspect.

Everybody was very merry and happy. The old darkies who had waited on the tables at Hilltop since it started were immaculate and grinning in white aprons and red bandanas.

"And now for the surprise," Miss Jenks said as they left the table after the nuts and fruit.

The girls hurried upstairs. Gwen came into the Twins's room to help them, and Poppy stayed with Sally and Daphne.

At last everything was ready. The stage was set for the first tableaux, and the lights in the ballroom were out.

The curtain rose slowly to discover Sally, dressed as a boy in a velvet suit, a broad, white lace collar and shoes with big buckles. She was posed on a rock with the woodland screen behind her, and she looked so like the first owner of Hilltop, whose painting hung in the library, that Miss Hull and the rest of the faculty gasped.

The next picture was a copy of another painting,—Ann and Prue, dressed in long, very full skirts that showed frilled pantelets beneath them, stood side by side before a tiny grave. They were "Delia and Constance Hull beside the grave of their favorite spaniel."

Prue was kneeling on a tack in the green denim floor cover, and her knee was so paralyzed after the curtain fell for the third time, that Sally had to lift her up. She limped for a week.

The Twins came next in two scenes from *The Haunted Balcony*. In the first, Phyllis, dressed in a soft white robe, sat with her chin cupped in her hands and her eyes looked out toward the rising sun. At the back of the stage behind a net curtain, to give the effect of a vision, were Gladys and Janet. They wore black satin knee breeches and white shirts, open at the throat. They held old pearl-handled duelling pistols pointed at each other's hearts.

The curtain fell, to rise again on the sad scene of the poor demented lady, about to throw herself from the balcony. Attendants were carrying in the crumpled body of her lover. Gladys looked very dead, while her brother stalked behind, his arms folded, a smile of triumph on his youthful face. Gwen was imposing as the old doctor carrying a very dilapidated bag.

The next illustrated the story of Mrs. Fanmore Hull's bravery. Poppy was seated before a spinning wheel, in a soft gray dress and cap and kerchief. At the door three villainous looking bandits peered in at her. One had a patch over his eye and they all looked very rakish.

Mrs. Hull went on spinning for a minute or two, and then she rose with

dignity and grace. She approached the robbers, and just as she reached the door she picked up the thin apron she was wearing and as one would scare the chickens off the grass, she said, "shoo!" The robbers disappeared.

Everybody laughed, for they knew the old story, and Miss Hull clapped delightedly.

The next was the famous Countess de Camier. Daphne in all her radiant loveliness was so like the miniature of the Countess, kept carefully in a locked case in the library, that Miss Hull was stunned. Like her charming model, Daphne wore a quaint shepherdess dress, that spread about her dainty slippers feet in soft billows. Her hat was a white leghorn with just a flat bow of blue velvet on top, but a mass of tiny forget-me-nots snuggled beneath the brim, against her wonderful hair, at the back.

She sat on a small, straight-back chair, leaning a little forward, her lips parted in a haunting little smile, and her eyes bright.

"Oh!" gasped everybody, the girls, the faculty, and Miss Hull, and then held their breaths, fearful lest the curtain drop and shut out the lovely picture.

At last it dropped slowly only to rise again and again.

"What a beautiful Juliet she would make!" Miss Hull said, and Miss Slocum nodded.

The last picture was hardly worth showing. Helen Jenkins, dressed in man's clothes, sat at the spinnet and tried to look as though she were composing a masterpiece, but everybody was too full of Daphne to look at her.

The curtain dropped, the lights came on, and the girls came from behind the scenes in their costumes to join in the dance that followed. Phyllis and Daphne made a beautiful picture as they walked arm in arm through the room, for Phyllis, with her hair over her shoulders and the soft ivory folds of her robe falling about her graceful body was very beautiful. They were almost rivalled in loveliness by Sally and Janet, for they made dashing boys and they swaggered about in fine style.

Miss Hull's usually remote disposition was touched by the nature of the surprise. She loved the history of her house, and she was delighted to see the genuine feeling the girls put into their impersonations, and she did not stint her praise as she said good night to each girl in turn.

It was a sleepy but very happy school that sought their beds as the grandfather clocks throughout the house struck eleven.

"I told you it wouldn't be hard to stay here for the hols, and it hasn't been, has it?"

"Certainly not."

"How about the trip to New York, Prus?"

"Oh, bother New York!" Prue replied, and the evening ended as the day had

begun, with laughter.

CHAPTER XVIII—The Elections

The low-ceilinged white-washed gym at Hilltop had originally been the store-room and the dairy. The rooms were thrown into one, and made an excellent gymnasium. A balcony ran around the sides for spectators, and the walls were lined with racks for dumb bells and other apparatus. Basket ball posts stood at either end, and hooked up to the ceiling were trapezes and bars.

Hilltop preferred to take its exercise out-of-doors, but the gym was a very good substitute in bad weather.

It was nearing the Christmas holidays, the most exciting time of the year. Teams were chosen and new members were elected to the various clubs.

Because of the unusually cold and rainy weather, the archery target had been brought in and put up in the gym. A soft, small mesh curtain hung behind it to catch stray arrows. The bows were piled up along the wall, and the arrows kept a neat pile beside them.

“It looks stuffy to me,” Sally complained. “I never shot indoors and I don’t think I’m going to like it.”

Janet eyed the arrangements critically.

“Oh, well, it will have the same effect on everybody,” she said. “And seriously, Sally, you know we haven’t a chance. There are loads of girls up for election.”

“I know and we’re only Sophs,” Sally agreed. “Still I can’t give up hope.”

“But Sally, there are only ten to be chosen, six regulars and four subs,” Janet reminded her. “Why, we haven’t a chance. There’s always next year though, and the blessed year after. You’ll be captain of sports then.”

“I will not, you will be. I decided that ages ago. Phil is to be president of the Dramatics, and Daphne of the class.”

Janet eyed her affectionately. “And what are you going to be when you have disposed of the rest of us?”

"Oh, guide, philosopher and friend to you all," Sally laughed. "Then I can have my finger in every pie."

"That's the way our four does things anyway," Janet laughed. They always spoke of themselves as "our four" since Daphne had happily thought of the name. The rest of the girls, old and young, looked on in approval. A school is apt to be proud of its close friendships.

Ann, Prue and Gladys, in imitation, called themselves "We and Co." and the school smiled and approved again.

The Red Twins came in and put an end to further discussion. They had recovered long since from their attack of measles and they had returned from the Infirmary very chastened in spirit—as Sally said, "the spirit of Hilltop was beginning to work." They were still too serious about every competition they entered, and they had not grown any fonder of each other during their illness.

It was the rules of the contest that everyone must use the regulation bows. The Twins had their own special make that they practiced with, preferring them in a superior way to the ones the school supplied.

They had them with them now and Sally and Janet stopped to admire them.

"Don't you think it mean we can't use them in the contest?" Bess asked in aggrieved tones.

"No, I don't, it would hardly be fair. You wouldn't want an advantage, would you?" Sally replied.

"I don't see why not," May said sulkily. "If we can have them, then we're lucky and we ought to benefit by our luck."

Janet and Sally did not bother to reply. They left the gym and climbed the steep back stairs.

"The more I see of those girls, the more I detest them," Janet said with feeling.

"I know," Sally agreed. "I begin to think they are possible and improving, and then they say a thing like that."

"Hopeless," Janet announced, and the Red Twins were discarded as unfit for further conversation.

"Hello, you two!" Daphne called from the door of the library as they passed. They went in and found Phyllis with her nose in a copy of the *Merchant of Venice*.

"Down looking at your miniature, Taffy?" Sally teased.

"I am not, indeed; I'm trying to learn Little Ellie by Mrs. Browning," Daphne protested. "It is a lovely thing," she added, turning to Janet.

"I knew you'd love it," Janet's eyes glowed with enthusiasm. "I wanted Phyllis to learn it but she stuck to 'the Quality of Mercy Is Not Strained,' and I don't know that I blame her, it's so beautiful."

"And short," Phyllis added, putting down the book. Sally went over and sat beside her and she slipped her arm about her neck.

"Tell us again, Sally, just what happens this afternoon," she said.

"At two o'clock the gong sounds," Sally began, "and everybody troops to the gym. There's a game of basket ball first. Every girl who is eligible gets a chance to play. After that comes the archery practice. We shoot, the same as we did on Archery Day, that is, all the eligible girls. Then there's the jumping and pole vaulting and the drill. Then cold tubs, supper, and the Dramatic Club girls recite in the evening. After that a dance and refreshments."

"But when do we know?" Phyllis insisted.

"Tonight when we go to our rooms. If we are the lucky ones we find notes under our pillows."

"My, I mean your Aunt Jane's Poll-parrot!" Janet exclaimed, "I wish it were over."

"So do I. The suspense is awful. Of course we all have a chance, but it's such a little one."

"My hand is so shakey now that I'll never be able even to lift my bow, let alone string it," Janet complained laughingly.

"Well, never mind, darling, your twin will probably get up and forget every line she ever knew," Phyllis comforted.

"Let's go out for a walk, and don't let's talk about it," Daphne suggested suddenly. "I had a letter from mother today," she began, and until lunch time they discussed home plans, for this was the last Saturday before the holidays.

At two o'clock they went to the gym.

The basket ball game was long and uninteresting. The New Wing supplied most of the players, and it looked as if they would be the final winners of the cup.

Then came the Archery Contest. Once more Janet beat the Red Twins. The change of bows hurt their form. It was never necessary to do it again. Sally's luck held, and she made a very good score, but there were so many girls, Juniors and Seniors competing, that neither Janet nor Sally felt at all hopeful.

At dinner there was a quiet lull over the dining-room. Hilltop insisted that her girls be good losers above everything else, and there was very little grumbling, but every girl tonight was busy with her own thoughts.

At last the recitations came. Girl after girl stood on the stage in the ballroom and recited lines from Shakespeare.

Not until Phyllis stood quietly before them, were they conscious of a personality. She said Portia's famous speech simply, but with understanding. She made the girls listen, and when she finished they gave her her just dues.

Daphne followed her, and as she told the story of Little Ellie, Janet felt again the spell of the Enchanted Kingdom.

Daphne's beauty always called forth instant appreciation from her school-mates, and tonight they were more than generous in their applause.

Dancing ended the evening, but tonight there was no lingering after sweet dreams had chimed out bed-time.

The girls hurried to their rooms.

Janet and Phyllis stood and looked at each other, and then dived under their pillows.

Only Janet found a note. She opened it listlessly. What was the fun if Phyllis had missed out? She read that she was duly elected to the Archery Team.

“Oh, Phil!” she whispered, as she dropped her note carelessly, but she did not have time to finish, before Sally and Daphne rushed in, both flourishing notes. They stopped aghast at the sight of the Twins.

Phyllis managed a very little smile.

“Congratulations,” she said.

“Phil, do you mean?” Daphne demanded and poor Phyllis nodded.

Ann and Prue and Gladys came dancing in. Gladys had made the Archery Team as a substitute.

They stopped, too shocked and surprised at the news of Phyllis’s failure.

“But you deserved it, Phil,” Ann insisted.

“Nonsense, I did no such thing. You don’t deserve things just because you want them,” Phyllis replied. “Goodness me, I’ve enough joy in your good luck to last me a life-time. So do forget about me.”

“What’s that?” Gladys demanded, and she swooped down under the bed and stood up with a note for Phyllis in her hand.

“It just fell down,” she cried. “Read it, Phil, quick!”

Phyllis read. She was a member of the Dramatic Club.

“Oh—oh, Jane!” was all she could find to say.

CHAPTER XIX—The Tennis Games

Christmas came, and with it the joys of long holidays and home. The Twins had a particularly good time, for Auntie Mogs, Mrs. Ladd, and Mrs. Hillis all entertained for them, and Mr. Keith, Donald’s father, gave them a marvelous party.

They found Chuck very much changed and inclined to be superior, but it was not long before he was back on his old footing with the Twins, showing a marked preference as always for Phyllis.

The last four days of the vacation were spent at Major Harrison's, Ann's uncle, who had surpassed all expectations by inviting Gladys and Prue, the Twins, and Daphne and Sally to stay with his niece for the entire three weeks.

They had all accepted for the last four days, and glorious days they had been. There were horses to ride, dogs to play with, and for Janet the library of her dreams.

Major Harrison, a taciturn old gentleman, had been very gruff at first, but towards the end of their visit he had sought out their companionship, and seemed to enjoy their good times as much as they did.

Janet was his especial pet. He rode with her, and together they visited the kennels each morning; and when Janet showed her skill in caring for a sick puppy, he had been so pleased that he had given the little brown-and-white ball to her. She had accepted the gift delightedly, but it was understood that the dog should stay at Glenside, for her own Boru would not welcome a rival in New York, and she could not keep him at Hilltop.

They had great fun at the christening, when the puppy was duly named Janet and recorded in the club annals.

After Christmas came the long term at school. But Easter was early, and thanks to the beautiful weather that came soon after the first of the year, the girls did not feel the usual mid-year strain.

When this chapter opens, Spring was in full sway at Hilltop. The great bushes of lilac that fringed the lawn were ready to blossom, and everywhere spring flowers added their brilliance to the deep blue and white of the sky.

Sports Week was in progress. Basket Ball Day had come and gone, leaving a victory to the new wing. The relay races had been run the day before, another victory for them.

Only Archery and Tennis remained, and unless the old wing won both they would be beaten at sports.

"I don't care as much about tennis as I do about archery," called Sally as they dressed that morning. All the doors were open and the remarks floated from room to room.

"Oh, I do, as a point, if nothing else," Ann called back from the end of the hall.

"Do me up, somebody," she added, as she struggled with a refractory button at the back of her white linen dress.

"If the new wing wins points in sports this year, I am not coming back," Gladys announced. "Here, Ann, turn 'round and stand still, I'll do you up. Think

how awful it would be to have the Red Twins gloating all next term," she added. "I simply couldn't stand it."

"Who plays them in the finals in doubles?" Prue asked.

"We do," Phyllis answered. "We played off yesterday, and, and of course they had to beat Poppy and Helen."

"Cheeky of them, I call it," Gladys commented.

"Oh, well, if you are up against them, we don't need to worry. How's your game?" Prue had never held a racket in her hand, but she always spoke in tennis terms.

"Very bad, thank you, Prue," Janet informed her. "I twisted my wrist yesterday, playing against Kitty and Louise, and Phyl hurt her foot."

"I suppose the Red Twins are in high feather then. How they love an advantage!" Sally said crossly.

"Well, they don't happen to know about this one?" Janet replied. "I have kept mighty still about it. My hand goes behind my back when I see any of the faculty, so they won't notice the adhesive plaster on my wrist."

"Is it as bad a sprain as that?" Daphne inquired.

"Yes, it's terrifically painful," Janet replied. "I can't see how I am going to manage," she added in a much louder voice than was necessary to carry across the hall.

"Who was that?" Gladys exclaimed suddenly. She was dressing in the corridor as well as in her own room.

Janet went to her door, and stood smiling after a retreating figure that was hurrying softly down the stairs.

"Hush, Glad, don't spoil my party," she said laughing. "That was Ethel Rivers, over scouting for the Red Twins. I saw her reflection in my mirror, so I gave her what news I could."

"But why tell her how sore your arm is? The Red Twins will gloat," Prue protested.

"Wait and see," Janet replied.

And the Red Twins did gloat. They even asked the Twins if they would like a handicap. Janet did the refusing in such a way, that it left them perfectly sure that she would have gladly taken it, had it been possible.

"What are you up to, Janet dear?" demanded Daphne, who had heard the conversation.

"A rather mean trick, Taffy," Janet admitted, "but I can't help it. They are so funny when they are sure of themselves. Do look at May condescending to Phyl. On my word I do believe she is giving her points."

Daphne took her by the shoulders and shook her. "Jan, tell me the truth. How much of a chance have the Red Twins?" she demanded.

"Not a chance in the world," Janet replied calmly.

And Daphne went back to the eager group of girls who were crowding for places near the court, and smiled her sweet dreamy smile in response to all the new wing girls' boasts.

The match began. Gwen and Stella Richardson played off the finals in singles, and after a hard fought fight, Gwen won.

"She has a back hand stroke that is a perfect whiz," Phyllis exclaimed admiringly. "Wish I could get it!"

"Oh, well played, Gwen, well played!" Janet called as flushed but triumphant Gwen left the court.

"Well fought!" Sally called as Stella followed her. She was smiling broadly.

"I'd hate to be beaten by any other girl, but it's a positive honor to be beaten by Gwen," she said good-naturedly.

"All right, you girls, already for the finals in doubles." Gwen blew her silver whistle. She was once more captain of sports.

The two sets of twins took their places.

"Awfully sorry about your arm!" Bess said with patronizing kindness as she passed Janet.

Janet nodded her thanks. Her arm did hurt, in spite of the way she had joked about it, and she could not help thinking of the Archery contest next day. She looked ruefully at her bandaged wrist as she took her place.

The Red Twins served first. Bess sent a tricky drop to Phyllis but her racket was waiting for it and she sent it back, just dribbling it over the net.

The old wing shouted with delight, and Bess stormed.

"Why don't you stand into the net? You know that's one of her tricks," she said angrily.

"Oh, keep still," May muttered.

"Love—15," Gwen called.

With more feeling of assurance, Bess served again. This time to Janet. She chanced the first ball and tried a new cut. It fell the wrong side of the net, but she tossed up the second undaunted.

Janet ran forward to meet it, and sent it back easily, to the extreme right hand corner of the court.

"Oh, pretty place!" Sally applauded from the side lines.

The Red Twins lost the first game of their serve and the second fell before Phyllis' smashing delivery. They won the third and fourth.

The twins had an easy time with the fifth and sixth. Bess and May were quarreling so that they were easy victims before Phyllis and Janet's perfect teamwork.

After the first set, the result of the match was a certainty. They stopped after

the fourth game and were received with salvos of applause.

Janet swayed a little as she walked off the court. Her wrist was sending blinding pains up her arm and she could not wait to tear off the strip of adhesive plaster that bound it so cruelly.

Sally and Daphne noticed her pallor and went to her.

“Get me a drink, will you, Taffy?” Janet said, weakly sitting down on the bench in a sudden fit of awful weakness.

She pulled off the bandage and disclosed an angry red swelling.

“Oh, Jane, and we thought your wrist was all a joke!” Sally exclaimed. “How awful, and archery—”

“Don’t,” Janet said swiftly. “If you remind me of it, I’ll weep.”

Phyllis meanwhile was talking to the Red Twins.

“I can’t see why we lost,” Bess said stubbornly. “We are better players than you are, and you know it.”

[image]

She pulled off the bandage and disclosed an angry red swelling

“Of course you are,” Phyllis agreed, “much better, but you have no notion of team-work. You both want to do it all, and get all the credit. I can’t see why you are twins. The way Jan and I feel, it amounts to the same thing, as long as *we* do it. That’s because we are twins, I suppose.”

“Well, it’s because *we* are twins that we can’t get along together,” May explained. “We don’t want the other one to get ahead, and it’s natural that we shouldn’t,” she added in justification.

“It’s not natural,” Phyllis contradicted; “and let me tell you this, until you learn to work together, you will never be any earthly good to each other or to Hilltop.”

Having given them this little thought to think over during the summer, Phyllis turned her back on them and went over to Janet.

CHAPTER XX—The Dramatic Club

Archery Day was a dismal one for Janet. She had to give up her place to Gladys, for her arm was so swollen that she could not even string her bow.

The old wing won, however, and it was Sally who had her name engraved on the cup as the winner of the highest score.

It was an exciting day, but the most thrilling thing happened in the evening. All preparations had been made for the play to be given on the night before Commencement. The Dramatic Club had decided on *Romeo and Juliet*. Daphne was to play Juliet, and Poppy Romeo.

Phyllis had a small part as one of Romeo's friends. Rehearsals had been going on for the past month, and the cast felt that they were word perfect in their parts at least.

Then the night before the performance Poppy fell down stairs. She cut her face and bruised her shoulders and was carried unconscious to the infirmary.

The Twins and Sally and Daphne heard the news in horrified silence.

“Who will play Romeo?” Daphne demanded.

The question was settled for them by Helen Jenkins. She knocked on the door and strode in in her usual business-like way.

She saw by their faces that they knew the news, so she went straight to the point.

“It's the worst possible thing that could have happened,” she said decidedly; and then without a word of warning, added, “Phyllis, *you* will have to play Romeo.”

“I play Romeo—”

“Phyl!”

“How wonderful!”

“But it's tomorrow,” were some of the exclamations that greeted Helen's news.

"Well, can you, or can't you?" Helen demanded. "I must hurry back to the Infirmary, and put Poppy's mind at rest. She is making herself sicker by worrying."

"Of course I'll do it," Phyllis answered promptly though her knees trembled beneath her.

"Good girl!"

"Tell Poppy that I will do my best, and now everybody please get out, I've got to study lines."

"Don't worry about lines," Janet said quietly.

"But why not?"

"Because I know the whole play backwards and frontwards, and I will sit in the wings and follow you with every letter," Janet promised.

Phyllis's face relaxed. "Then that's all right," she said. "I'll brush up on them, for I know them myself, of course, only I'm not sure of the cues."

"I'll give you those."

Sally and Daphne paused at the door.

"Call me when you want to go over it with me," Daphne said. "And oh, Phyl! I didn't like to say it before Helen, but I am so thrilled that I don't know what to do."

"Taffy, you're a darling," Phyllis replied. "I'll probably spoil all your nice scenes, too."

"Oh, no you won't," Sally returned decidedly.

"How do you know?" Phyllis asked laughing.

"Aunt Jane's Poll-parrot told me," Sally replied as the door closed on them.

It was a busy twenty-four hours that followed. Janet stayed with Phyllis every minute and gave her of her own courage.

The dress rehearsal was a decided failure, but the old girls were not at all alarmed.

"I'm hopeless," Phyllis protested.

"You are not," Janet denied hotly.

"How do you feel, honey?" Poppy inquired. She was downstairs, but a sad sight indeed, with her face covered with little pieces of gauze slapped on with bits of adhesive plaster.

"Terrified, Poppy," Phyllis admitted.

"That's just right. I wouldn't have you sure of yourself for a second," Poppy comforted.

"Oh, dear, I must go and study some more," Phyllis sighed.

"You are to do nothing of the kind. You are to go out and take a walk, and then come in and have a nice nap."

Phyllis laughed at the idea, but Poppy, with the aid of Sally and Janet won her point, and with Daphne, nearly as frightened as Phyllis, they went for a long

walk.

When they got back they were glad enough for a little nap.

At last the evening came, and with it all the attendant excitement of a performance. The old girls were as calm as they could be. They were used to it, but poor Daphne and Phyllis!

They felt the difference in their ages and class, and were conscious of a tiny feeling of resentment, not in the girls of the Dramatic Club, but in some of the Juniors who had not been elected.

The curtain rose on time, at exactly eight o'clock. The setting was charming and Phyllis, sure of Janet's support, accredited herself well.

The ballroom was filled with strange faces, for there were lots of guests, and after the first terrified glance at them, Phyllis kept her eyes on the stage.

By the time the balcony scene came, she was almost calm, and her voice floated clear and mellow as she began—

“He jests at scars who never felt a wound—”

Daphne was a beautiful Juliet, with her soft hair bound down by a fillet of pearls. When she leaned from her balcony to ask—

“What man art thou, who thus bescreened in night so stumbleth on
my council?”

The guests caught their breaths from sheer wonder.

Phyllis, perhaps under the witchery of Daphne's smile, forgot her self-consciousness, and threw herself into the part with the result that she wooed her Juliet with all the ardor of old Verona.

It was a triumph for the Dramatic Club, but for Daphne and Phyllis in particular. They went to their rooms that night with their pretty heads buzzing with all the flattery they had received. But, like the sensible children that they were, they soon dismissed it as unimportant.

“Aren't you the happiest person in the whole world?” Janet demanded. “You ought to be.”

Phyllis shook her head. “No, I can't be perfectly happy, for every once in a while I remember that this is our last night, and then I could weep.”

“I know, Taffy said the same thing,” Janet agreed. “But, Phyl, think of next year. We'll be old girls then.”

Phyllis gave a happy little sigh and snuggled into her pillow.

“Phyl,” Janet whispered after a minute, “I—I'm awfully proud of you.”

Phyllis leaned over and kissed her.

"There!" she said, "that's the only compliment I have wanted all evening, and I didn't think I was going to get it."

They fell asleep almost simultaneously, and the spirit of Hilltop watched their slumbers, equally proud of them both.

CHAPTER XXI—And Last

The twins stood in the Hall waiting for their carriage to come for them. Sally and Daphne were with them.

"Aunt Jane's Poll-parrot, how I hate to go!" Sally exclaimed.

"Hasn't it been a simply perfect year?" Phyllis agreed.

The rest nodded.

"But next year will be even perfecter," Daphne said happily.

"We didn't make such a bad record," Sally remarked contentedly, knowing full well that no Sophomore class had ever done as much.

Their eyes traveled to the mantel. The big tennis cup bore Gwen's name, and under it "The Page Twins." Sally's name glittered from the smooth surface of the Archery cup, and on the Dramatic Club's, Phyllis and Daphne's names stood out.

"How about this summer?" Janet inquired. "You are both surely coming to Old Chester for July aren't you?"

"We are," Sally and Daphne replied together.

The carriages arrived at that moment, and singing and cheering Hilltop, all the school drove off down the long hill, leaving the white house that crowned it a little forlorn in the drowsy sunshine.

THE END

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